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★ Anon.



THE HOUSE OF RIMMON

BY
MARY S. WATTS

VAN CLEVE
THE LEGACY
THE RUDDER
NATHAN BURKE
THE NOON-MARK
THREE SHORT PLAYS
FROM FATHER TO SON
THE BOARDMAN FAMILY
THE RISE OF JENNIE CUSHING

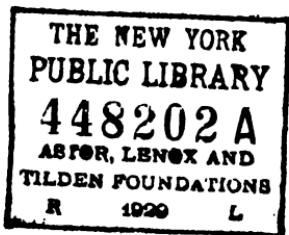
1911/29
W.M.H.

The House of Rimmon

BY
MARY S. WATTS

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VRAJESL'JU

PART ONE



PART ONE

CHAPTER I

BACK in the early nineties, at about the date when some of us were casting our first votes, there was born to Melvin B. Harrod and Lena (Howard) Harrod, his wife, a son whom they named after the foremost Democrat of the day who was just then returning with his political party to Washington, the White House, the seats of the mighty, helped by Mr. Harrod's vote—not *his* first, however. Melvin B. had possessed and exercised the franchise for all of fifteen years; he was in the insurance business—with the Ohio Valley Mutual Fire and Life—had been married some time, and there were two or three small Harrods in the nursery already when Master Grover Cleveland Harrod made his debut there.

“The nursery,” by the way, is a euphemism for whatever room in the house was being utilized as a corral for the children at any given time, with a crib in one corner, toys all over the floor, a low clothes-horse draped with damp little garments and sections of toweling eternally standing open around the grate fire. It might be upstairs or down; the background varied from bedroom furniture and Mrs. Harrod's sewing-machine to the tapestry lounge in the parlor, and even the dining-room sideboard; “the nursery” was everywhere and there was seldom any nurse. Indeed, cooks, housemaids, domestics of what title you choose were rare and transient visitors in the

Harrod establishment. They were paid enough; they had food and drink and privileges and consideration enough, for Melvin made a comfortable living and was a good-natured, open-handed man, never grumbling at the table or the bills, but—"Children, you know!" Mrs. Melvin would explain, with plaintive patience; "when they hear we're six in the family, that settles it! They agree to come, but they never do; that's the last I ever see of them. I don't know what's the matter with all the girls; they don't seem to want to work. If you just have one, she says the place is too hard for her, and if you try having two, they squabble like hyenas and nothing gets done because each one says it's the other's place to do it. Do you know of a laundress? Of course our wash is heavy, it can't help but be—children, you know!"

Little Cleve's first recollections, intermingling with rocking-horses, trains of tin cars, animal crackers, Brother's envied possessions, Sister's crying-spells, the high chair, the pussy, A-was-an-Apple, Now-I-lay-me, Santa Claus, recurrently presented his mother, short and plump and fair and pretty with black-blue eyes like pansies and very small, cunningly dimpled hands and feet, in the padded easy-chair, cuddling him on her lap and uttering words such as just quoted to some black-avised guest in calling costume, of whom the baby was afraid, in spite of her blandishments. He could not be induced to "go to" anybody, exhibiting thus early a shyness which he never wholly outgrew; rather it increased with his years and stature. He remembered other homely and trifling things; Father coming home of an evening, whistling and slapping the folded newspaper against his leg in time to the tune; the man-of-all-work performing

interesting miracles with the hose and hydrant; the man-of-all-work's dog, his own dog, sundry other dogs; a succession of wall-papers in his mother's room; their first piano, an upright played "by hand" which gave way to the pianola, which in turn gave way to the Victrola; the front porch with the octagonal kiosk built out at the corner; the middle-aged house which was never either entirely out of repair or entirely in—all these impressions fitted together or superimposed in Cleve's memory resulted in the composite he knew as home, and looked back upon in after life with a moderate warmth of feeling which he persuaded himself was affection. In reality he had not been particularly fond of it; in common with most children, he took home for granted, like the sunlight; and certainly no sentiment about it was powerful enough to keep him from entertaining secret, dazzling-visions of running away from it to become a circus-rider, a pirate, a bandit king, or other hero of adventure, modelled on the leading character in the last gory romance he had read.

He read a good many, beginning at or about the age of eight, and from that time on; and in hidden places and moments wrote a good many, too, by fits and starts, never finishing any of them; the magazines of his fancy always seemed to him to be fairly crammed to bursting with incidents and characters enough for a three-volume novel, but confronted with pen and paper this prodigious store somehow would not outlast a single chapter! Happily, the fact never daunted him; he would abandon one literary effort and go at another with an energy semipermanently fresh and sanguine, embarrassed only by the necessity for secrecy. The boy was enough of a boy to be ashamed of pursuits so unbecoming, or at

any rate so certain to be made fun of; he went in terror of discovery, hiding his besmeared manuscripts on top of the wardrobe, under the eaves in the attic, behind the cellar steps, denying all knowledge of them, and lying desperately if caught in the act of writing—base expedients that shamed him heartily. To do him justice, he was not without his standards; he had a fumbling perception that what he wrote was trash, and that, easy as it looked, it took years and work to make a writer just as it took years and work to the mastery of any trade. At twelve or fourteen, the Gentlemen of France and Allan Quatermains and Long John Silvers ceased to arouse his envy; it was not their exploits but their authors whom he would emulate and outrank.

This sort of dreaming is not so unusual among boys as to impress the average parent greatly; nevertheless, Mrs. Harrod—who represented the absolute average—professed an alarmed admiration verging on panic, over Cleveland's tendencies. To be sure, she was forever falling into a state of excitement about the gifts or achievements of some member of the family. Greta had such a turn for music! You positively could not keep the child away from the player; she spent all her pocket-money buying new rolls for it; and when a musical show came along, like "The Merry Widow" for instance, or that other new one, "The Chinese Honeymoon," why, her father just simply *had* to take her, that was all! Well, Melvin had a *marvellous* ear himself, Greta came by hers rightly. Or, she believed that Billy was a real mechanical genius! You ought to see him take his bicycle to pieces—entirely to *pieces*, mind you!—and clean it and put it together again as good as new; same way with his camera; and the other day he fixed the water-back in the

range where it had come apart, so that it worked perfectly, and they didn't have to send for a plumber and go to all that expense after all. He ought to have a technical school education, everybody said. Mr. Schott—you know, the Assistant Professor of Romance Languages over at the University—Mr. Schott said to her: “‘Mrs. Harrod, you send that boy of yours to the Institute of Technology and he'll be one of our leading engineers in no time!’ Engineering's a splendid profession; it's so difficult a young man can get on very fast, because he hasn't any competition, you know; it's never overcrowded.” Or: Cleve had developed this wonderfully imaginative strain! As a little fellow he was perfectly devoted to books, always going off in a corner by himself to read; but here lately he had begun to write stories of his own. She had found some of them and read them and actually she was perfectly *spell-bound!* If she could just get hold of somebody to typewrite them she would send them to the magazines; Miss Schuler at the office said she hadn't the time—but that was just an excuse: you could tell by the way she kept talking around that she wanted to be paid for it. But the stories were really *good*; lots of those you read couldn't compare with them. So well-written you know, besides having such originality. Cleve always had written well; he had a natural taste for language. You ought to see his report cards; he'd have a hundred in grammar and English regularly month after month. That *showed*. And he could memorize anything—simply *anything*—great long poems and things out of Shakespeare; Miss Harmon was always having him recite Friday afternoons. She knew she could depend on Cleve. According to *her* he had a real talent for literature and it ought to be cultivated by every possible

means—those were her exact words. Cleve, darling, come here and tell Mrs. Jaynes about that play you're writing; the one you made up about the cowboy and the girl that fell in love with each other and she wants to run off with him, and he's so fine he won't do it—what? Oh, yes, you do now—you remember it. Go ahead and tell Mrs. Jaynes—what? Yes, she does, dearie, she *wants* to hear about it, don't you, Mrs. Jaynes? There now, Cleve, you see she *does* want to, she—oh, well! You can't do anything with them when they get a stubborn fit. Children, you know—!

The budding genius was wont to slink away from these encounters with a most wretched hang-dog look not at all in keeping, for a genius, and brimming with inarticulate resentment. Cleve writhed to hear his mother's proud and affectionate rhapsodies; he hated the Mrs. Jayneses for their very patience and good nature and good manners. The boy felt it silly and unfair to show him off against his will, and demand that he take people at haphazard into his confidence. Tell them what he was writing, forsooth! As if he could, even if he chose! The order set at naught his personal rights—rights that seemed to him in this matter, peculiarly personal. In his heart Cleve was as cocksure and conceited as you please about his abilities—all the while distrusting them. He thought he could do anything, yet dissatisfaction with what he did do gnawed at him insatiably; he had all the artist's hopeless belief in himself. Instinct warned him that he could not explain these other warring instincts even to the most interested and sympathetic of audiences. Still, he must have an audience; still he would be let alone. And already he felt a certain isolation, needed imperatively, yet distasteful.

The fact is that the position of star student, favorite of the teachers at school and a prodigy at home is not all that it is cracked up to be—in a plain everyday phrase which would have shocked young Mr. Harrod's "natural taste for language" at this time. It entails too many responsibilities, and on the whole, too much notice. The strong light that beats upon a prize pupil threatens to illuminate those shortcomings, a consciousness of which is the very soul of vanity. Youth lacks the two main easements of life, a sense of humor and the spirit of compromise—fortunately, for otherwise how could Youth, which does everything, do anything? Poor Cleve took himself with abysmal seriousness, expected great things, believed that everybody else expected them of him, and endured torments of uncertainty about making good. He longed vehemently to make good in ways other than scholastic, in athletics, in fraternity circles, in all the thousand and one activities of school life, admiring secretly and slavishly the Olympians of the stadium, the presidents of the societies, the leading exponents of music and the drama, all of whom fought rather shy of him. The honest boys and girls set him down amongst themselves for a highbrow; they would have been astounded could they have known the wistful envy with which he regarded them and their spectacular popularity. Cleve could imagine himself with tights and a sword as gallant a Romeo or Orlando as the best; he could imagine himself carried around the field on the shoulders of the crowd after an hour of glorious struggle at football, genially tolerant of the applauding mob, a splendid figure; the trouble was that nobody else could imagine him in those postures. What was more, as he was gloomily aware, the mere suggestion would have sent

them all into fits of opprobrious laughter. In truth, he was an oversized, clumsy lump of a boy who would scarcely have been an ornament, as far as looks go, to any public function; and for all his bulk and ungainly strength, he was not apt at games, the teams who occasionally gave him a trial invariably rejecting him in favor of some lad of half his muscle and less than half his intelligence who, however, seldom failed to justify their judgment. On the social side, it was the same depressing story; Cleve was tongue-tied in the presence of girls, and among the boys had some few dependents or toadies but no real friends.

He had no friends even at home, and was nowhere more alone. Not that the domestic atmosphere was unkind or unhappy—wholly the contrary. The big, slipshod establishment with its disorderly comfort, its hit-or-miss meals and service, its indiscriminate welcome, radiated a thoughtless amiability. Day and night it ran over with gay, noisy, healthy-minded, thoroughly normal young people, Cleve's brothers and sisters and their friends—for *they* had friends in plenty. If this company and the other youthful Harrods were not at all out of the ordinary, they still had ample spirit, sense and character, qualities of which the sum is an invaluable capacity for getting along with the world, making the best of things, being satisfied with oneself and one's lot. They did not shut Cleve out of their counsels intentionally; the shy, vain, melancholy, self-centered youngster shut himself out, waiting to be sought—and naturally it never came into their heads to seek him. Anybody was free of their society; it was a democracy of goodwill and jolly give-and-take. They stood in no awe of him because of his superior attainments; what were

those, weighed in the balance against his sheer futility when it came to the practical business of life as they reckoned it? He never saw a joke; he hadn't any *pep*; he couldn't *do* anything; he might be a walking Carnegie Library—but what's the use, they questioned pertinently. It was true. Cleve could not join in their facile laughter, could not make anything out of their catchwords; could not force an interest in their innocent intrigues. He believed himself to be used alternately as a butt or a convenience—than which nothing could have been farther from their design.

In short, he did not understand companions of his own age any better than they understood him, and possibly neither side tried too hard, for youth is not conspicuously patient at that species of endeavor. As for the older people, show me the young person of seventeen or eighteen who is interested, genuinely interested, in his parents, who values their judgments, or enters into their pleasures, or has the slightest comprehension of their responsibilities. I say, show me, and I will show you a phenomenon and on the whole an unnatural and unwholesome sort of creature. It is all very well, in the abstract, to approve of old heads on young shoulders; in reality the spectacle is not infrequently as unpleasing as were the positions reversed—and no one will deny that a young head on old shoulders makes a sorry effect. Our acquaintance, Mr. Grover Cleveland Harrod, differed not at all from the rest of his generation, unless in being more conscious of his intolerance, and helplessly shamed by it. The boy shrank from acknowledging to himself that his mother bored him; it tortured his absurd conceit to fall so far below his equally absurd Chevalier-Bayard ideals. What kind of a way was that for a

man to think of his own mother, he would ask himself in disgust. But it was the ignoble truth. The pretty, vivacious, sweet-tempered woman with her demonstrative affection, her caresses, her unbounded and therefore—as Cleve judged—unreasoned admiration for himself and everything he did and every word he said, tired and tried him. He had his youthfully cynical doubts as to whether he really and truly meant anything to her since he beheld her going into the same cheap ecstacies over a new hat, a new cook, a new piece of furniture. It contributed to his dissatisfaction to know himself alone in his estimate; none of the others saw anything to criticize, and that fact argued conclusively that there was something wrong with himself.

Cleve was nearing nineteen and in his junior year at the University, the youngest member of the class (a circumstance which was dinned about by Mrs. Harrod and others so perseveringly in season and out of season that all his own relish became as apples of Sodom) when the fact slowly forced itself upon his attention that everybody was not joining in this acclaim, that there were some who shared his own opinion—or what he thought was his opinion—namely, that something was wrong with him. Strange to say, the young gentleman, far from taking pleasure in this confirmation, was greatly surprised and discomfited; he was ready to admit being *different*, but—ahem!—not different in—er—a derogatory sense. The unwelcome enlightenment began when Bill, who was three years older than Cleveland, got his first steady job, in McElroy & Stevens' office selling bonds and learning the brokerage business generally. Contrary to his mother's predictions, Bill did not turn out a mechanical genius or a genius of any kind; he was not of a

studious turn and got through high school by a very narrow margin; but withal he was a sensible, hard-headed young fellow who meant to get on in the world and undoubtedly would get on in the world, bond selling or somehow. Mrs. Harrod was not disappointed; she had forgotten all about his mechanical genius and discoursed just as copiously and enthusiastically nowadays about his commercial success. Wasn't William wonderful? He was so reliable, so *solid!* He had never given them one minute's anxiety; only think how few fathers and mothers could say that of their boys! But now came Lawrence, the baby of the family, sixteen years old, clamoring to be released from school and allowed to go out and get something to do and make his own money, too. He was another who had not much liking or aptitude for what may be found in books, though bright enough; and showed enough character, too, carrying his point after, or rather in the midst of, much wrangling and discontent and parental reprimand, by marching off without leave and single-handed purveying himself the desired job, that of messenger at the Travellers' and Traders' Bank, at thirty-five dollars a month. Paternal authority succumbed to such ambition and resourcefulness. After all, Melvin Harrod said with a kind of humorous chagrin, *he* could not afford to give the boy that much, and it was natural to a boy to want his own money; they got tired of running to Dad, and of the feeling that they had to tell what they did with every dime. It was natural—to any boy with any get-up-and-get, that is.

One gathered from his manner that it was not only natural, but (within limits) commendable; and his eyes would wander to and dwell upon his second son with a perplexed and speculative look—quite by

inadvertence, for Melvin was not a man for unkind insinuations or comparisons. Nevertheless, Cleve, whose allowance of spending-money, though by no means roomy, had always sufficed, who had never suffered the slightest embarrassment about asking or accounting for it, and to whom his working career was still what it had been when he was ten, a thing of the future remote, unplanned but brilliant—Cleve at length began to have an inkling that, instead of surpassing the universally accepted standards, he failed to come up to some of them. It took a good while, for all unknowingly he had encased himself in a thick shell of reticence and indifference combined which the crass public rarely penetrated; and for his part, he scarcely knew what went on in his own family. The change in their attitude, when he finally perceived it, at first merely bewildered him. The laughing tolerance he was used to had always been seasoned with a certain pride in him; what had become of it? What was the matter? He himself was unchanged, still the youngest of his class, still at its head, still taking all the honors, elected to all the coveted dignities, Literary Editor of the Annual, highest of high lights in the Pen-and-Scroll, prize-winner of the Comus Club contest for one-act plays. What more could he do? What more could the family possibly expect of him?

Alas, they were ceasing to expect anything! The other young men—for Lawrence considered himself a man now with his thirty-five a month jingling in his pockets, minus the board money he sturdily insisted on handing over to his mother every Saturday night—hardly took any notice of Cleve these days. Their strongest feeling for him was an indulgent, or semi-affectionate contempt. Over at the University Cleve was a big noise, they would some-

times remark to each other with mutual grins; some writer, hey? Tell you, he had Kipling and Barrie and Jack London and all the rest of the best-sellers in the also-ran class! They thought it a marrowy joke to inquire how his last was selling, or how much he was taking down weekly in royalties on that comedy he wrote for John Drew. Or they would beckon him aside with exaggerated gestures which the company must observe, and in a stage whisper describe a Packard which they professed to have seen on sale in some automobile showroom down town. "Mighty classy car, Cleve, with all the latest features, and only seven thousand! It's just what you said the other day you were after for Mother's birthday. Let's see, though, you didn't want to go over five thousand—oh, well, it's so little more, you wouldn't mind, would you? This last book's going great, anyhow. Art for Art's sake—but money talks!—oh, ho, ho! Haw, haw, haw!"

Everybody would join in the philistine guffawing—everybody except the object of it, standing red-faced, angry and helpless amongst them. Of the stinging repartee that rose to his lips Cleve would not utter a word for fear of distressing his mother, or worse still, rousing her to take his part. Anything but *that*, Good Heavens! The young fellow, besides, was generous enough to acquit his brothers of deliberate cruelty; they did not suspect that, by a ghastly irony, an automobile was only one of the costly gifts which he meant to shower upon Mother, in that indistinct hereafter when Cleveland Harrod would be a famous name in American literature. To have betrayed so flamboyant an expectation would have been to invite the sordidly practical comment that a week's board in the hand was worth a dozen automobiles in the bush; and there were moments of

dread and depression when Cleve wondered whether that were not true.

"See here, Father, I'll quit at the University, and get something to do if—if you think I'd better," he blurted out one day to the senior Harrod, hunting him up in private after some such scene as has just been sketched. His father, who was reading the paper, looked up in surprise, faintly frowning at the interruption.

"What's that, Cleve? You'd better *what?*" And, Cleve stammering making the motion a second time—"Why, no, I *don't* think so at all," said Melvin, surveying him dubiously. "My idea has always been that a boy ought to have all the education he'll take. What could you do, anyhow? Got anything in view? Know of a place? No? Well then, I guess you may as well go on and finish. You graduate in another year, don't you? That'll be *something*. After you're through you might get a position teaching somewhere." With which he went back to the paper.

Cleve felt himself dismissed, and went away not so much relieved as obscurely hurt and troubled. He had been in earnest, ready to make a real sacrifice, and his father had received him as if he were negligible and whatever he did negligible. Cleve had no intention of becoming a teacher, going over the same thing year after year to successive herds of raw youth—no, indeed! He meant to be the celebrated Cleveland Harrod. Nobody understood him; nobody believed in him. With a spurt of fiery resolution—or was it only resentment?—he swore to himself that he'd *show* them.

CHAPTER II

THAT same winter Melvin Harrod died. He died of pneumonia after only three days' illness; they thought he was getting better—indeed, so appallingly swift and sure was the disease that they scarcely had time to realize that he was ill. His brother had not been sent for; even the trained nurse was in the house only a few hours. It was pitiful to see the widow, sitting in terrified bewilderment like a child, unable to comprehend what had happened to her, all her sweet, harmless chatter silenced. Only yesterday she was running upstairs and down, happily waiting on the sick man, changing poultices, measuring out doses, concocting little dainties that were still on the pantry shelves—only yesterday. There was poor Melvin's watch in the same place on the bureau where he laid it Monday afternoon when he came home early and said he felt pretty rocky and guessed he'd go to bed; his clothes hung on their accustomed hook in the closet with the change in the pockets and a couple of cigars in an envelope and the big old copper two-cent piece that he always carried for a lucky-penny—how often she had joked him about that superstitious trick! They had been married not quite twenty-five years. Now the undertaker's men were moving about in the room where he lay; she heard them ask for towels; someone came and wanted to know the date of Mr. Harrod's birth for the obituary notice; and Larry brought up a telegram from Uncle John, saying he would get there Saturday morning.

William and Lawrence both rose to the occasion with readiness and decision and efficiency; they did everything and saw to everything except what Greta, who was as sensible and well-balanced, saw to and did. It does not argue the young people to be less fond of their father or less grieved at his loss, that they were able to control themselves and found a certain satisfaction in activity. They were gentle with their mother, doing their best to soothe and support her in the ways that naturally occurred to their practical characters. "Never you mind, Moms, don't you be frightened; we'll take care of you. Everything's going to be all right, and go along just the same," Billy said, patting her shoulder in awkward affection. And it was no idle assurance that he uttered, for Billy had before this given abundant evidence of force and manliness. But poor Lena Harrod only looked at him dumb and uncomforted. Strange to say, it was Cleve to whom she clung, Cleve who did nothing to help, wandering about, or shrinking into corners as lost and silent and stunned as she herself. The boy had not been fonder of his father than the other children were; but his imagination was as much affected as his heart. We see many things finished, we never see the end of anything until we see death; and it was this blank finality that oppressed Cleve as it did his mother.

"What shall we do? Oh, what shall we do?" she sobbed against his shoulder; he could only answer with his rough, boyish caress. It never came into Cleve's head to say that he would take care of her; even if it had, he would somehow have divined that that was not what she wanted.

Uncle John—that is to say, John Harrod, Melvin's brother—duly arrived, having made the jour-

ney from Minneapolis in record time, as he boasted reciting the circumstances of his departure. "Got your wire, and right away sent one of the boys out to buy a ticket, while I beat it up to the flat to get some things, and then I went back to the office and closed up some business with a man I had an appointment with, and ran out and grabbed a taxi, and just did make the eight-fifteen! Lucky the weather's so mild, isn't it? If we'd struck a blizzard, I might have been stalled somewhere in a snowdrift this minute."

"We'd have held the funeral for you—if it wasn't *too* long, that is, of course," Bill told him.

"Yeah—of course—the funeral—poor Mel!" said the other, recollecting his errand with an abrupt gravity. It was fully ten years since he had been in the city, and five since the brothers had met; they were both busy, hard-working men. John had some sort of an advertising agency up in Minneapolis, with which he was understood to be doing very well now at last, after years of energy and perseverance and some pretty severe discouragements. The flat he spoke of had been recently leased in the most fashionable and expensive quarter of the town, and Aunt Ida had a little electric brougham. There were no children. As to Melvin's family, the uncle freely confessed that he would not have known any of them, remembering the boys only as "little fellows in knee-pants"; and their recollections of him must have been as vague. Nevertheless, William went down to meet him and pilot him to the house, picking him out of the crowd at the depot with unerring judgment. No question of it, William was a bright young man. That, at least, was Mr. John Harrod's opinion formed after a short time in his nephew's company, even under circumstances so unfavorable

to a study of character; but John was fifty-five years old, and had spent the better part of the fifty-five in diligently getting acquainted with his fellow-men; not for nothing was he the manager of a successful advertising agency.

It was all over at last, the service, and the long dismal ride to and from the cemetery; the pall-bearers, mostly Melvin's associates at the office, dispersed; the kind souls who had come forward as they always do at such times with a hundred small services, writing notes, telephoning, arranging the flowers, loaning black veils and gloves, helping in the kitchen and parlor alike, withdrew. The family sat down to dinner in the house that all at once seemed so chilly and vacant and silent—we must eat and drink for tomorrow we die. And it must be said that the tribe of youngsters who had hardly done growing yet and were as healthy and active as are commonly to be found, tucked away heartily on the funeral baked meats, after an hour or so in the open air and the fatigue and irregularities of the last few days. By fortunate accident there happened to be a colored maid-of-all-work gifted at the stove and flat-irons as members of that race frequently are; Mrs. Harrod sighingly remarked that she did not know whether she could keep Prunella *now*; six dollars a week. Melvin said it was all right, but *now*—she didn't know whether they could afford to have anybody.

This was when they had gone in by the living-room fire, and Uncle John, stirring uncomfortably and clearing his throat and taking unnecessary time to light his cigar, at length said: "Well, now, you know how it is with me. I'd like to stay, and do what I can to—er—to straighten things out, but I've got to go right back. There's a train tomorrow

afternoon I was figuring on; it would get me home in time so as not to lose the whole day Monday, you know——” He looked to William instinctively for moral support, and William said, sure! They all understood. Sure! “Well then,” said Mr. Harrod, chewing his cigar, glancing apologetically at the widow, “you see how it is. It’s important to talk over everything while we’re all here together and have the chance, otherwise I wouldn’t—er—I wouldn’t feel like bringing the matter up—um—so soon——” and here evidently feeling that he had amply observed all conventions, Mr. Harrod with perceptible relief, came to the point, looking at Bill again. “Have you any idea how your father was fixed? Did he leave anything?”

“He had insurance—ten thousand,” Bill answered readily. “There wouldn’t be anything else to speak of. We’re a sizable family, you know, Uncle John, and it took all—up to the last year or so, that is. I don’t think Dad ever made any will. Because of course, we’d want Mother and Greta to have what there was, anyhow. Dad knew that; he knew he didn’t need to leave us boys anything.”

“The rent’s seventy-five dollars; it ought to be paid Friday,” said Mrs. Harrod tremulously. “There’ll be the undertaker’s bill. It was three hundred and sixty dollars when poor Ma died, I remember—but everything’s gone up so——”

“Oh, that’s all right, Moms, we’ll fix that. Now you quit worrying——”

“But your uncle wants to know, Larry dear——”

“I was going to say,” said John, cutting everybody short, “that the Ohio Valley people are going to do something. Those gentlemen I was with in the auto coming back—of course, I didn’t say anything myself—but one of them, Mr.—well, it was

that short one—stout—wears these big round spectacles——”

“Mr. Hornblow,” William supplied. “He’s the general manager——”

“That’s right—Hornblow. I can’t remember their names, meeting so many of ‘em all at one time. He told me they were going to do something. He spoke very nicely about your father. I said I was sure my brother had always had their interests at heart, and given them the best service any man could, and so on,” said Mr. Harrod with a competent air, “and I said the family would appreciate anything the company did.”

“‘Appreciate!’” Why, I think it’s just lovely of them!” said Mrs. Harrod, beginning to cry. “Did you—did he say how much it would be, John?”

“Well, they’ll probably have to have a meeting of the directors or something of that sort, you know, before they can take action. I couldn’t ask, of course.”

“Oh, I know you couldn’t—I just thought Mr. Hornblow—I just thought he might have mentioned——”

“They’re mighty good people, anyhow!” William declared warmly. “To be sure, Dad had been with them for years.”

His uncle agreed that it was customary under the circumstances. “Melvin had given the best years of his life to working for them. It’s customary.”

“They don’t *have* to, just the same!” said Cleve sharply—so sharply that the others were startled; and Mr. Harrod—who, aside from shaking hands and saying: “Ah, this is Cleveland, is it?” had not bestowed much attention on him up to this moment—now looked at him in surprise and interrogation.

“Why, no, they don’t *have* to,” he said peaceably.

“We were just saying it was a nice thing to do. But it’s nothing out of the way for an employee of your father’s standing——”

“He worked terribly hard—he just never thought about himself at all when it came to the company’s business. Night after night sometimes!” sobbed Mrs. Harrod. “Till twelve and one o’clock *often* over their papers and reports and things. You children don’t know anything about it. I used to *make* him go to bed. He’d be so tired—all worn out. They won’t get anybody that will work for them that way again. He *earned* it, whatever they agree to give. They needn’t think it’s so grand. It’s the least they could do——”

“Oh, *don’t*, Mother! *Don’t* say things like that!” Cleve implored her tragically. The young fellow’s very flesh flinched to hear this talk that seemed to him so sordid; he visioned for an instant the little arid, barren space around which his mother’s mind alternately crawled and fluttered, and the glimpse shook him with mingled horror and compassion. In a kind of panic he reminded himself that she was his mother, she would go to the stake for him any day; Mr. Hornblow and the others were doing a fine thing, a great-hearted thing; but she was only a woman and ought not to be expected to understand them or their motives——

“Well, if you think your father wasn’t worth it—if you think he didn’t *deserve* all the company could do and more, Cleve,” cried out his mother, flaring up fiercely among her tears—“that just shows how little you appreciated him! I should think you’d be ashamed of yourself. Your father slaving himself to death, and then you stand there and have the face to say he didn’t do *anything*, and they don’t need to do anything. The idea! A pension isn’t any-

thing to that great, big wealthy concern; they'll never miss it; they won't have to go without something so as to give it. They've all got automobiles, Mr. Hornblow and Mr. Avery and every one of them, and you know how they live. They *ought* to do it—”

“Now, now, *now*, Lena, don't get hysterical!” said Mr. Harrod, intervening with authority, and on Cleve's side as developed unexpectedly enough to the latter. “The boy's right; you'd better not say anything like that, not even here in the family. Things have a way of getting out and getting repeated around, you know; a person can't be too careful. Anything of that sort coming from you wouldn't look well. The Ohio Valley people might get a very bad impression. Cleve's right.”

Cleve felt the family gaze turned on him with a wholly novel respect; there was something monstrously, incredibly ironical about his false position. “I—I didn't mean *that*, Uncle John,” he faltered desperately. “I meant Mother shouldn't feel—none of us ought to feel—”

“Never mind, never mind, that's all right, Cleveland, we all understand,” said the other kindly, desirous of helping him out, and perhaps a little afraid that the boy's evident emotion would bring on a general breakdown all around. In fact, as it was, Mr. Harrod had to fish out his handkerchief in something of a hurry and use it resoundingly. “We all know how you feel about your poor father,” said he, and put the subject aside with a sigh. “Now then, we must get down to business, because as I said before, it's about our only chance. Melvin had ten thousand life insurance, your mother's sure of that, anyhow. We don't know what the pension will be, so we can't figure it in, but you boys are all work-

ing. Now, what you want to do is to make some kind of an estimate about the household expenses, what it costs you all to live, and see how much you can set off. Supposing, for instance, you stay right here in this house——”

William interposed; he did not believe they could afford to keep the house; it was too big and expensive to heat. Greta suggested courageously that they could rent a room to somebody or take a boarder—a man, for choice; men were so much less trouble.

“Oh, we’d never get a cook to stay,” said Mrs. Harrod in alarm. “They won’t stay in a boarding-house, you know. They’re afraid of the work——”

“They don’t stay anyhow. What’s the odds? We could get along without ‘em,” said Greta, hardily. “I bet I could learn and be a first-rate cook.”

“Not *my* cook!” said Larry. Their young laughter rang unrestrained in the house of mourning; even the widow smiled, cheered by the dear, familiar sound.

“The boys are doing something already, John,” she said with pride. “All but Cleve, of course.”

“Hey! Cleve?”

It was explained that Cleve was going to the University still; he would finish in another year—if he could go on, that is—if Uncle John thought he ought to go on. And there was a silence while Mr. Harrod bent a speculative eye on the young man.

“Why——” he said at length, and paused and rubbed his chin. “Why, it seems as if it would be a pity for him to stop, but ways and means must be considered. After all, he’s had three years, you say, and I don’t suppose there’s such a lot left to be learned—I mean it’s not indispensable. You hear a

lot about college doing so much for a man—but—I don't know—Can't you do something on the side, Cleve, that would help out?"

Everybody looked at Cleve again, this time rather hopefully, and it was with a wretched sense of inadequacy that he stammered something about not having much time—they gave you all you could do—

"I know—I know—but there ought to be something in connection with your regular studies—er—coaching, or something, that you could squeeze in," said his uncle. "Plenty of boys work their way through from the start, washing dishes and putting in coal, for that matter—"

"Oh, mercy, John, he doesn't have to do things like *that*!" cried Mrs. Harrod, appalled. "Never mind, Cleve, dearie, we'll get along so you won't have to do anything like *that*. He can write wonderfully, John, everybody says so. I wish you could see some of the things he's written—plays and poems. Haven't you got any of them here, Cleve? I'd like your uncle to read one—one of the short ones. It won't take any time, John. You really ought to—"

"Write, hey?" said Mr. Harrod, surveying the miserable Cleve good-humoredly, yet with a keener interest. "Do they have courses in writing? Uh-huh. Well, what sort of writing? What do they prepare you for?"

"You're thinking of business writing, I guess," said Bill. "Yeah, they have commercial courses, don't they, Cleve? That's not what he's taking though, Uncle John. He just writes."

"It isn't anything—it doesn't amount to anything," Cleve mumbled in desperation. "Mother thinks everything we any of us do is wonderful. I can't write, Uncle John."

"Yes, you can too, Cleve. The things *are* good, John. He has real talent, all the instructors say so."

Larry made a statement to the effect that if you handed Cleve a brickbat he got mad because it wasn't a bouquet; and if you handed him a bouquet, he'd get mad because it wasn't a brickbat. So what was the use? It's temperament. "Am I right?" said Larry, sardonically, and he cooed persuasively to Cleve: "Show Uncle John once, Cleve. He'd like to be shown. Make a noise like a temperament, can't you?"

Uncle John, however, quelled the tormentor, and his manner was serious. "You can joke another time, Lawrence," said he, in a tone that caused the young gentleman to long ardently for the floor to open and let him down into the cellar. Mr. Harrod spoke to Cleve. "I understand that you've only studied writing in a desultory way, without any definite object, so to speak. Well, I used to think that anything on that order was all bosh—sheer waste of time, but here recently I've changed my mind," said Mr. Harrod, in a liberal style. "There's something in it. You notice it all the time in my business. Some men can write ads and some men can't. I can see there's a knack to it, but whether it's natural or whether it can be taught, I don't know. I would judge, though, from these commercial schools giving attention to writing as—er—as a study, that, as I say, there's something in it. A person would have to have a taste for it, I suppose, like having an ear for music, you know. Now, it seems Cleve's got that, so it's very probable he could be trained. You've no idea of the demand for trained writing. Just for instance, I've got a customer this minute, man that has a big corset business that he wants to

put out advertising for, all over the country. He came to me and told me that he'd tried and tried, and he couldn't get the right thing; people weren't attracted. He'd spent thousands of dollars and he wasn't getting results. And mind you," said Mr. Harrod, warming to the topic as he went along and looking around on them for sympathy—"mind you, he has a good article. He makes a fine corset, worth everything he claims for it; it would sell right along if people only knew about it. Of course, competition is very keen; there're lots of good corsets on the market, but he's confident he could make his go if he could get hold of a good, catchy ad. I told him I'd make every effort—"

"How much does he sell 'em for?" inquired William briskly.

"Seven dollars up."

"Is that a lot to give for a pair of corsets, Moms?"

Mrs. Harrod temporized. "It depends. I didn't used to think ten was too much to give for a real good pair," she said with a sigh. "What's the name of them, John."

"Why, they haven't got any yet, except the name of the firm—Snithers' Corset. A good name was one of the things he wanted to know if I could furnish," said Mr. Harrod. He turned again to Cleve with interest. "There's your chance, Cleve, see? This about your liking to write put me in mind of it right off. You ought to be able to think up something. I don't say you'd make your fortune, but people will give pretty nearly anything on earth nowadays for a good, original idea. I would myself! If you could handle this proposition, it would lead to others, naturally. You might try, anyhow," said Uncle John, beaming on him encouragingly.

"Like 'His Master's Voice,' you know, Cleve," Greta cried out, sparkling with excitement. "If you could get something as good as that——! Whoever thought that up must have made hundreds of thousands of dollars, don't you believe?"

"Or 'Hasn't Scratched Yet!' I do think that's the cutest thing. And then there's that other one of the kitten all tangled up in a skein of silk——"

"And there're some dandy cigarette ones, too——"

"And soap—Gee!"

Everybody had a suggestion except the one most interested, who sat dumb in impotent indignation. *Corsets!* Degradation! Simultaneously poor Cleve perceived confusing elements of comedy about the scene, even about himself and his resentment. Snithers' Corsets! It was hideous and funny.

"I don't know anything about them," he choked out at last, feeling the collective interest centering on him expectantly. "I wouldn't know what to say——"

"Cleve's always been a good boy, John," his mother put in quickly—and rather irrelevantly, one might think. But, for some reason, the other two young men burst into a series of snorts of laughter alternated with heroic but futile attempts to smother it; Greta giggled, coloring; even Uncle John's substantial features betrayed a momentary instability. Cleve himself essayed to smile, red in the face, sullen, smouldering with anger. "Oh, well, I didn't mean——" said Mrs. Harrod, in confusion. "That is I meant—I meant——"

"Of course—that's all right!" said Uncle John hastily. "He would have to—er—to get some pointers——"

"Buy a pair and take a look at 'em, Cleve," said

Larry; and there was fresh guffawing, quite open this time, in the middle of which Cleve got up in a towering temper, and started to leave the room.

"Here! Wait! Don't go, Cleveland! You boys shut up!" Mr. Harrod said forcibly, half rising himself. "Come back here, Cleve, and don't pay any attention to 'em. I'm serious about this thing. It's something you can do, maybe, and you ought to try to do it anyhow—"

"It's something I can't do, and I'm not going to try. I wouldn't if I could!" shouted Cleve. "You don't need to have me on your minds, any of you, I don't intend to live on Mother and Greta. I'll get something to do—you don't need to worry. I don't mind their laughing at me, Uncle John, they've always laughed at me, I ought to be used to it. Perhaps I won't ever learn to write, I can't tell; but there's one thing certain, I won't cheapen whatever talent I've got, writing advertisements. It—it would be prostitution!" screeched Cleve, having by this time worked himself up into a fine, reckless fury. "That's what it would be—prostitution—"

"Stop! Hush! My Lord, stop!" remonstrated Mr. Harrod, genuinely shocked. "Don't use words like that before your mother and sister! Good gracious, haven't you got any common decency—?"

But Cleve was gone with the door banging thunderously after him, and the family sat looking at one another in a species of alarmed impatience. Mr. Harrod put aside his sister-in-law's apologies kindly enough, but later, in a private moment, he inquired of William: "Say, what's the matter with Cleveland, anyhow?" in a tone and with an expression the reverse of complimentary to the subject of the question.

William ejaculated contemptuously. "Oh, *Cleve!* Why, that was him all over, Uncle John. *I* don't know what's the matter with him. Sometimes it looks as if he was just plain nutty!"

CHAPTER III

THERE ensued for the young hero, Mr. Cleveland Harrod, one of those dingy periods which most heroes, in common with lesser mortals, have to weather through at least once in their lives—or so we gather from their biographies. To be out of credit with the family was, in a sense no novelty; a suspicion that he was not fulfilling everybody's expectations had already assailed Cleve from time to time. But presently it was borne in upon him that he was not fulfilling his own. Whether his uncle was right or not in doubting that a college education always adequately equips a young man for making his living, it was apparent that two-thirds of a college education did nothing for him at all; a reputation for scholarship did nothing; a prize-winning intellect did nothing. Cleve, who, notwithstanding the prideful modesty of his disclaimers, secretly valued himself pretty high, now found that abroad as at home genius was not considered an asset but a liability! Nobody needed the services of a promising student of the literary arts; if anything, they fought rather shy of him. Even the newspapers and libraries had no place for a writer, contrary to what might be supposed. Meanwhile the magazines rejected his short stories, the publishers his long ones with disheartening unanimity; poetry he discovered to be a drug on the market; critical and miscellaneous essays were the guarded province of specialists; and as for plays——!

Meanwhile, also, he went on living at home, not only with the family but on the family—alas for all those proud and fiery statements about his future and his intentions and his convictions! Not that anyone threw them in his face, or reproached or nagged him; sometimes Cleve bitterly wished they would. But his brothers and sisters were at once too thoroughly good-hearted, too cautious of paining their mother, and in the last analysis, too indifferent. It was the old story; they had no time for Cleve, no interests with him; he was apart from and out of their lives. They got used to seeing the big, silent young fellow sitting around the house all day long, or going errands on which he invariably forgot what he was sent for, or shutting himself up in the garret until the small hours over some unprofitable manuscript. Once in a while Bill and Larry would privately exchange conversation spiced with harmless profanity, of which the pith was that Cleve made them tired, that it was about time he made good as Young Shakespeare or else quit the game; and each would charge the other with the task of giving Cleve a talking-to—which, however, neither ever brought himself to perform. The sensible youths realized that a talking-to between brothers amounts to nothing more or less than a loud row, in the course of which everyone is sure to lose his temper and say something he later regrets; they preferred peace and self-respect even at the cost of keeping a great, lazy lumox soldiering around, eating three hearty meals a day and pretending to write. The discussions ended as often as not with ironic intimations that they should worry about Cleve, shouldn't they? Let him alone!

The unhappy situation endured for months, a year; it bid fair to drag along forever, when one day

the unexpected happened. That is to say, the *New England Monthly* took a story! Not only took it but paid for it with a cheque for a hundred dollars, accompanied by a handsome letter of commendation and inquiry from the editor. Now indeed was the household thrown into commotion. Mrs. Harrod's naïve astonishment most exuberantly expressed was not from one point of view, altogether flattering, but Cleve was amiable enough to be amused; his own gratification was dashed with surprise. He stood vindicated; but instead of experiencing the ultimate satisfaction, only found his ambition whetted to a keener edge. So they thought *that* was good, did they? He'd *show* them! And instant misgiving visited him; *could* he show them? He was as silent as ever in the midst of the excitement and applause while the cheque and letter went the rounds; the spectacle of his brothers at first incredulous, then oddly disconcerted, moved him with no sense of triumph; success is a responsibility. "I'll do better some day. You mustn't go around and tell people and brag, Mother. It doesn't—it isn't becoming," was all he would say.

"What are you going to do with the money, Cleve?" Greta alone had the hardihood to ask.

"I don't know. I haven't thought about it."

Afterwards, in a calmer moment, when their own amazement and a certain unwilling awe at their brother's achievement had abated, William confided to Lawrence that he saw Cleve's finish! "Getting that story taken settles it," observed the elder brother pessimistically. "He'll never do a lick of real, straight-out *work* the rest of his life!"

"Well, some of 'em make a lot of money, don't they?"

"Yeah, that's what you hear. But you never met

anybody that *knew*. And besides, people that make a success of writing probably would make a success of anything they happened to get started at; you can't go by *them*. Anyhow, they've got to sell more than one story a year; and I don't see how they can ever tell whether what they write is going to sell or not. I don't see how they can count on anything."

"Oh, I guess it's easy after they get to be known."

"Well, Cleve isn't known yet—not by a long shot! But now he'll keep on forever. One story a year. I see his finish."

It would be pleasant to be able to state that William was grossly mistaken; to picture Cleve's immediate ascent, two steps at a time, to the top-most perch of literary fame and his secure tenure of the position from that time on without any more disappointments or reverses, and of course without doing another lick of work. Unfortunately, nothing of the kind came to pass. The *New England Monthly* might be called a flash in the pan; it's arbiters never again accepted a scratch of the pen out of all the manuscripts with which Cleve hopefully deluged them. Their letters of rejection at length began, so the chagrined author fancied, to sound such a note of polite fatigue that he stopped pestering them—his own words addressed to himself with rueful humor. There were other periodicals by the dozens, not all of the *Monthly*'s standing, to be sure, but still rated high. Let the grapes be sour! But somehow he could not suit the others, either; he could not suit even the second- and third-rate ones—if any such exist. Cleve tried them all, as he had many times before. A magazine called *The Sheaves*, devoted to the Interests of Art in America—so it proclaimed—invited his contributions and took one of them with assurances of payment, which un-

doubtedly would have been kept but for the fact that the enterprise collapsed very shortly; the poem never got into print, Mrs. Harrod was out the three-dollar subscription she had sent them in order to see it there, and the *Interests of Art in America*, according to Larry, got a terrible jolt. At the end of another twelve months or so, the author was precisely where he had been at the beginning, save for a local notoriety which he loathed. People were obsessed by a kind but embarrassing curiosity; they would be forever asking him about his "royalties" and whether he was under contract and to whom, and when his next story was coming out! They offered "material" and advice—"Write a thriller—one of these forty-buckets-of-blood detective stories with some lovemaking in it, of course, they all have that. You could do it easy, and you'd see how quick it would sell!" Cleve did not retort that to follow this pot-boiling counsel would be *prostitution*; he was too wise for that nowadays.

He wondered now and sometimes regretted that he had not armed himself with the *Monthly's* hundred dollars and set off for New York upon a hazard; it had occurred to him, but only as something distant and to be done in proper sequence when he should have accomplished more here at home, laid by other hundreds, entered by common consent on the career of letters. In the meanwhile, the money had evaporated, trickled through his pockets, he could no longer remember how. He was not of an adventurous spirit, and for that matter entertained a formless conviction that there is as much to be witnessed and interpreted just outside the front door as on a journey to the antipodes; and that it became his talent best to cultivate his own garden, drink out of his own small cup. So that in the end he did not

seek to appease his restlessness by pawning his clothes and joining the brotherhood of hoboes, or by running off with a circus, or stowing away on one of the river steamboats, or in fine, adopting any of the orthodox and at the same time melodramatic methods by which genius "sees life"—no, Cleve's expedient was simplicity itself; it even defied the criticism of the thrifty, the prudent, the industrious Williams and Uncle Johns of the universe. He went to work in a Sunshine Bakery.

These establishments belonged to a "chain"; there could be found one or more in every suburb and dotted all over the downtown district with their cheerfully shining fronts of red paint and plate-glass. Behind the big window you might see tiers of Sunshine loaves, and those tall rolls with a surface resembling highly varnished yellow pine wood-work peculiar to bakeshops the world over; there were pies, too, and gashed and contorted shapes of dough affirmed by the Sunshine advertisements to be "like Mother used to make." To the rear, behind a light partition, the stoves were in full blast at certain hours, turning out such of these dainties as were not delivered from the central stores by van every morning in abhorrent quantities—bushels of cookies, acres of tin trays spread with patty-cases, biscuits to feed an army. Warm gusts scented with cinnamon and currants and grease saluted the passer-by and encompassed the shop crew all day long; after a few weeks of this sirocco, Cleve marvelled that he had once thought it appetizing, and as for the family at home they complained sharply and *à haute voix*; even his mother complained that his clothes were "smelling up" the whole house, and segregated them in a remote closet so that the wardrobes of the rest might escape contamination. It was not the

only score upon which they expressed disapproval; Cleve contemplated with melancholy irony the fact that nobody was pleased because he had at last complied with everybody's desire and was living up to everybody's standard. Not so long ago they had all been at him to get a job; now that he had done it, they would be finding fault still to his face, and excusing him feebly behind his back!

"Yes, he's at the Sunshine Bakery, the one on Albemarle Street," he would overhear Mrs. Harrod confirming the rumour with labored lightness, and adding hastily; "Oh, not *cooking!* Cleve would be a funny cook—oh, ha, ha, tee-hee-hee!—oh, that's too absurd!" The other would always join obligingly in the laughter though, to say the truth, it had rather a forced and tinny sound. "No, he's in the office—well, the front part where they sell things. Eh? Oh, don't ask *me!* I can't imagine why he wants to do it, unless it's to get material, and we don't dare to ask him any questions about *that*. You know how writers are—or perhaps you *don't* know, you haven't got one in the family. My dear, you simply have to make up your mind to their being *different* from everyone else, and just let it go at *that!*"

And so on, and so on, the visitors throwing in affiliations now and then, and all the while laughing in their sleeves—or sneering, so Cleve imagined in his helpless mortification. Why, why, in Heaven's name, all these flimsy pretenses! If they must talk about him, why not tell the truth? He worked for his living, he worked for fifteen dollars a week, he worked in the bakery because there was nothing else he could do. Thousands of young men were working for the same reasons in positions no better, and it was considered meritorious; the circumstance that

he had literary ambitions and had once got a story published was wholly beside the mark, need not to be taken into account at all, was nobody's business, in short. He must stop it somehow, stop the torrent of explanations that did not explain or explained too much, and either way invited scoffing. He would talk to his mother, show her that all her well-meant and gracious crookednesses did was to put him in a ridiculously false position. But he never did; a kind of pity restrained his vexation.

The others were more outspoken. Like most brothers and sisters they did not feel the responsibility that too often burdens a parent; they shared in general the attitude of Uncle John. "Well, I'll be doggoned!" said Mr. Harrod, hearing the news. "Too high and mighty to write advertisements—so he goes to work in a bakery! Well, I *will* be doggoned! Don't know that you can say anything, though. If Cleve's satisfied—! And he's doing something to earn his salt, anyhow."

He was; the place was no sinecure. Cleve's day began early and its duties were light but unending. He had to turn out an hour before the rest of the household stirred so as to allow time for bathing, shaving, dressing, bolting down a dish of cereal that he warmed for himself at the gas-range, and scurrying for the Albemarle Street car. It was a long ride and the shop must open promptly at seven to catch the working peoples' trade. In accordance with the Sunshine policy, it was in the heart of a working district, and naturally subject to keen competition from other shops of other "chains" and scores of individual enterprises. During the rush hours while the nearby public school, and the coffin factory across the street, and the Steel-Rensche Tool-Works a square down were "taking in" or "letting out," or

on market days when the farmers' wagons and trucks from the commission houses went through in a procession, or Saturday afternoons when the housewives came out in force from every tenement-house for blocks around—during these periods, Cleve was on his feet and from one end of the shop to the other every second, sacking up Sunshine products, taking in money, jangling at the cash register. He had the intermittent support of sometimes two shopgirls, sometimes only one; the petticoat personnel varied from week to week, but was monotonously inefficient. Cleve himself was none too brilliant, but at least he kept doggedly at it. The boss, in whom several years of hiring and discharging incompetents had developed a misanthropic humor, would point out that you couldn't expect to get anything but a fifteen-dollar man for a fifteen-dollar job; as for the cooks (he said) there was one important fact in their favor, *viz*: they could cook. And what was more they would—when they weren't in jail for wife-beating, or drunk, or out on strike, or just feeling too tired to work. Oh, yes, take it by and large, he didn't have any trouble with the cooks!

These latter gentry were employed in numbers at the main shops, going on in shifts by night as well as day, but only two were needed on the Albemarle Street stand. They reported for duty an hour before Cleve, and when he reached the place would already be slamming amongst their tins, slapping dough, swearing, grumbling, or whistling according to mood, a steady undercurrent to the street and shop noises. Sometimes, in an interval between bakings—so he supposed—or when the ill-ventilated den waxed too hot and close even for their seasoned senses, he would see one or other of them snatching

a breath of air at the alley door, with arms crossed in a resting posture, or swabbing off his forehead on a greasy rag of towel that hung there. There was a hairy, obese, middle-aged one who constantly read a little paper printed in outlandish characters, the organ of the colony of Slavic immigrants—not more than fifty in all—down on Platt Street whence he hailed; his name was Anton Zirka, it transpired, and he went to the Greek Church. He had a wife at some village of unpronounceable name in the old country, to whom he sent money-orders, though more than once he hinted gloomy doubts of her fidelity; he was going to bring her out—possibly to make sure—as soon as he could afford her passage. Cleve wondered who would do the cooking in the Zirka menage. But more than this he never found out, for Zirka would be communicative only on the subject of Mrs. Zirka's chastity, it seemed; about politics, business, the times, public affairs he either had no opinions or was too cautious to utter them. "He's got to draw the line somewhere," the other baker said, with a dry grin.

The other baker was a young fellow about Cleve's age, rather lean, sallow and undersized, though not sickly-looking as the description would imply. In the somewhat negligent style of dress or undress that both affected professionally, he showed more muscle than his heavy fellow-artist, and an infinitely better build. Everybody called him George, so Cleve fell in with the fashion, a familiarity to which the other raised no objection; his was the sovereign tolerance dashed with satire for his neighbor's manners which is the one racial characteristic of a race-less people. Seeing him for the first time, one would have as certainly set him down for a native Ameri-

can as Zirka for an alien; and moreover there was upon George the stamp unmistakable yet impossible to define, of the city-bred. He radiated the atmosphere of our streets, of electric light signs and asphalt and "boulevards," of railroad yards, baseball parks, lunch counters, ticket gates; in his talk there was the contradiction of shrewdness and simplicity, of complete sophistication and complete ignorance that announces the town with every word. Cleve Harrod had been born and brought up in the city, too; but he wore no such distinguishing hall-marks, a fact for which some difference in caste may account. It was a difference of which Cleve was aware, but he made nothing of it; one man was as good as another in his honest American view—though it is doubtful whether he would have presented George to his sister.

Nevertheless Greta's own circle might have numbered much more undesirable acquaintances in respect to decency and manliness; Cleve was aware of that also—but these others would dress in the proper clothes, eat, smoke, take off their hats the proper way, speak shibboleth in short, and that was what counted with girls like Greta, Cleve thought. He had no idea how George would acquit himself of these social duties, never having been in his company away from the Sunshine ovens. He seemed to be a sedate youth, worked hard, was notably temperate, and not much of a talker. Cleve gathered that there was an invalid mother in his background, an elderly step-sister who kept the house, and another very much younger "at the Lyric." He would casually mention having to stop at the stage door on his way home to get "the kid," and after this had occurred two or three times it became apparent that whatever her employment there, she was

not "at the Lyric" as a member of the theatrical profession. Indeed, George said as much.

"Naw, she isn't with the show, she isn't with any show," he said. "Except once in a while she gets to go on for an extra. They pay 'em two dollars. It's mighty little, but I guess the management figger that the experience oughta be worth something—getting used to the lights and the scenery and having people look at 'em, you know, so they don't get scared and fall all over themselves. Anyway the girls are all crazy about it; everyone of 'em thinks she'll be another Maude Adams, if she only gets a chance; they could hire 'em by the hundreds for two bucks, only they pick the best lookers, of course. The kid's right there with the looks," said the brother with some pride. "They always take her. They've got to knowing her now, anyway. She's around there, you know."

From this speech, which was unusually lengthy and confidential for George, Cleve conjectured that Miss George must be merely one of the nebulae of hangers-on surrounding every theatre, available for choruses and mob scenes, and probably helping in the women's dressing rooms or even with the cleaning and straightening-up between performances. An income of fifteen dollars a week did not allow of much play-going even in those comparatively easy days, and Mr. Harrod may besides have been too finicking in his choice of entertainment for the Lyric, which seldom housed anything but burlesque and extravaganza with a great deal of cheap gayety, cheap noise, cheap color, so that in spite of a passing curiosity about her, he never made an effort to see George's sister on the stage, and George himself was markedly fastidious about those who saw her off of it. At any rate, about this time there began to

occur events so stupendous as even to take Cleve's mind off of himself and his environment and his purposes. August of the year nineteen-fourteen came round.

CHAPTER IV

FOR a while, apart from the daily grist of excitement and horror, Cleve, in common with almost everybody else in the country, found himself unaffected personally; it was not until much later that suddenly, in a clap, we all perceived that these United States, too, had a stake on the table. The mills of the gods began to grind with a rapidity contrary to all precedent, and finer than ever before. Colossal amounts of money were made dramatically, and as dramatically lost; the changes and uncertainties of the times were felt no less on Albemarle Street than elsewhere. Zirka, who belonged to a union, vanished incontinently as the result of some dissatisfactory negotiations with the leaders of that particular branch of "labor"; nobody could be found to replace him, and George, a non-union man as it seemed, held on alone at the double task for several weeks; but in the end he departed likewise, though honorably enough, to fabulous pay in a munitions factory as they heard later. Cleve, receiving forty dollars a week for the same work as before—the good-for-nothing girl assistants were getting fifteen now!—was too puzzled to exult. He seemed to be no better off with his forty; in those days of fantastic exaggerations, three times as much money would not by any means go three times as far; it was witch's gold, precious over night, in the morning rubbish.

When the time came all the Harrod boys enlisted. Their mother made no protest; she saw them go

with the resolutely smiling fortitude of all the mothers. It was amazing, clean out of her character, anyone would have thought; but poor Lena Harrod never dreamed of petitioning the favor of any power—perhaps not even the greatest Power of all!—for herself and her sons. She wanted only to do her duty, simply and humbly and as a matter of course, and to suffer with the other women. Greta was engaged to a nice young fellow in the Engineers' Corps, and Mrs. Harrod felt sorry for *her*—much sorrier than for herself! “I've had my life. I got married pretty young, and I had a dear good husband and the children came, and we had a happy time for years and years,” she would say. “But poor little Greta! The child hasn't had *anything* yet. It's such a pity. I'm awfully sorry for Greta. Of course I don't let her see it. You know how that is.” The mothers looked at one another with comprehending eyes over the socks they were knitting, or the surgical-dressings counter. “Well, they don't realize it. They don't know what they're missing—that's one blessing!” some one would say with a sigh.

Cleve went up to Fort Benjamin Harrison with the rest, and got his second-lieutenancy, and was assigned to the 999th at Camp Tecumseh. He made a good enough showing as an officer, and doubtless would have made a good enough showing in actual warfare, had he ever had the chance. But ill-luck pursued him. With all the desire in the world to get into the fighting, as well-equipped and of as good material physically and mentally as thousands who did get in, he never stirred a foot from his native land during the entire eighteen months of our participation in the War. Officers came and officers went; a dozen times he and his command “en-

trained" in the favorite phrase of the day for camps in Oklahoma, in Tennessee, in Maine, in Texas—but never for an Atlantic port. William got over and saw real service, and got a piece of shell in his arm at Chateau-Thierry; Larry went into the navy and within six weeks was hanging on and off the Irish coast in wild weather beating the seas for enemy submarines. Letters came back from a score of boyhood companions, some of whom got the war-cross, and some fell gallantly, and some were listed missing, and some came through without a scratch—and still Cleve stayed on, drilling and drilling, making practice-marches, inspecting kits, seeing that rookies kept their quarters clean. That the grind was vitally necessary did not render it any the less tedious and dispiriting; sometimes Cleve, reading about some spectacular exploit at the front, thought with irony that it was easy enough to be heroic in comparison to the sustained strain of being merely uncomfortable.

One day, while in cantonments at Camp Israel Putnam, he received a letter from France which besides being without date and from some nameless locality as usual, was in a strange hand; he opened it with the quick misgivings of those days. However, nothing had happened to Bill; it became evident as the letter progressed that its author—no very able penman—was not associated with officers of Bill's rank. He stated that he expected Cleve would be surprised to hear from him; that the draft had got him in July after the U. S. went in; that he could have got to stay home on account of the folks, but they claimed they could get along all right, and he felt like he would just as soon go and see something of it, as long as there would not likely ever be another war, not in our time anyhow. He heard

Cleve was in too, and had kept on the lookout for him and always meant to write, but was mostly too busy. They kept you busy. He was with the kitchen outfit. He would say that there was times when it was as hot as it used to be down on dear old Albemarle Street, only different reasons.

Here Cleve, who had been wondering with all his might who this correspondent was, and if there could possibly be another Lieutenant Cleveland Harrod whose mail he had got by mistake, gave a shout and skipped to the last page and down to the signature: "Geo. Tarvey." He had not known what George's last name was until that moment! Then he turned back and re-read the whole missive from the beginning, more carefully. Poor George was manifestly homesick and a little blue. He said the mails were very slow and uncertain and that he and many of the other men had not heard from their folks for seven weeks. It made a fellow lonesome and sometimes he got to worrying for fear something had happened. He guessed it was all right at his home, though, because Ella, that was his oldest sister that Cleve had heard him talk about, she was the kind that was on the job every minute, and she would of let him know if they were in trouble, only he might not get the letter owing to moving around and the P. O. Dept. being n. g. looked like. The last he heard Soph was with the "Boardwalk Belles" which he didn't know anything about but it sounded like a punk show and he bet if he had been home he would not have let her go, but girls didnt know anything and Soph did not always have good health which worried him some. Well, if Cleve had time George hoped he would write and it would be pretty nice when they all got back to the little old U. S. A. He was respectfully Geo. Tarvey.

Cleve did write, a long letter full of the sprightliest gossip he could hunt up or manufacture; he was touched by the other's artless revelations. Soph, he reflected, must be "the kid," and he wished with all his heart that he could have sent George some reassuring news about her; it was only too probable that the brother's intuitions about the "*Boardwalk Belles*" were correct. Cleve saw in this small incident a theme for a story, susceptible of development in either the grave or gay vein, and made a beginning on it, writing in his spare moments; but presently gave up in an attack of quixotic reluctance to use material gotten in such a way. It seemed disloyalty to poor Tarvey, though of a certainty he would not recognize his own connection with the tale even should he read it—and it was next to impossible to imagine him reading anything. There were no more letters from him; and time and the hour run through the roughest day, for not many months thereafter, the Armistice was signed, the peace parleying entered upon, and Johnny came marching home.

That is, he marched home sometimes but not invariably. Cleve happened to be a matter of a hundred miles nearer to New York City than to his own home at the time of demobilization; it was easy to persuade himself and to write to the family that he must see the metropolis first; perhaps by some benevolent miracle Bill's regiment or Larry's ship would come in while he was there, or if he waited long enough. The truth was that this un-laurelled Ulysses had no desire to return to the old scenes, the old occupations or rather dearth of occupations; nor was he the only young man whom the ending of the War found infected with restlessness, discontent, a dull distaste for whatever life offered that

had before seemed wholesome and desirable. But in Cleve's case the weary and reluctant mood was aggravated, strange as it may seem, by the fact that he had really relinquished nothing, and made no sacrifices when he volunteered for the army; now there was nothing for him to return to, no career to resume, no reconstruction to be attempted. "You worrying about your job?" some kind-hearted fellow-officer asked, noting his clouded face. "Why, pshaw, they'll let you have it back and glad to! They've likely had all kinds of trouble trying to get somebody in your place. Buck up, son! You'll be all right!" He was astounded at the burst of saturnine merriment with which Cleve greeted this well-meant effort. His job, indeed! His precious job at the Sunshine Bakery!

He went down to New York, then, like ten thousand adventurers before and since, and found a hall-bedroom, and definitely took out naturalization-papers in Bohemia. He had some money, having saved his pay, and he administered this narrow fund with a species of humorous prudence of which no one would have believed him possessed. The young fellow was singularly exempt from the lawless impulses that we are taught beset and harry the artistic temperament; a kind of spiritual and carnal frugality ruled him; it was not hard for Cleve to practice abstinence. He had ideals and perhaps was not without that saving sense of humor which is as invaluable for guidance as moral rectitude. He frankly looked for an entertaining impropriety in his new environment, a Latin-Quarter atmosphere such as was not to be found in his Mid-Western city, where sadly provincial traditions of respectability still prevailed. But apparently it is only in Paris—perhaps only in the Paris of fiction—that disreputa-

bility can be picturesque; they do these things better abroad. Elsewhere immorality upon close acquaintance turns out to be an excessively dull and sordid business, as liberal as may be our view of it. Cleve fell in with numbers of Trilbys and Mimis who one and all impressed him as using too much rouge and not enough soap and water. The amateur vampires with their oglings and their laboriously serpentine attitudinizing moved him only to unappreciative laughter; the professional ones mostly let him alone for the thoroughly professional reason that a moneyless young man was not worth their while. Cleve told himself that on the whole he respected the latter hard-headed and calculating practitioners more than the others; they, at least, were authentic. As for the rest of the Bohemian population, the short-haired girls, the long-haired young men, the writers of free verse, the Cubist daubers, the youthful communist, socialist, Bolshevik spouters, the devotees of solemn clap-trap in every branch of art, they seemed to Cleve to be frantically endeavoring to create for themselves an illusion of worth—endeavoring but never succeeding. It was all a sham, and at heart they knew it to be a sham; there was no conviction in their ostentatious defiance of conventions, their parade of decadence; it was only the desperate expedient of mediocrity to get itself noticed. For what Cleve knew his own endowment might be mediocre, but he swore inwardly that it would be a long lifetime before he descended to the childish aping of the most stupid ugliness in human nature in the hope of arresting public attention. Sometimes he would spend an evening at some imitation-Montmartre studio, amongst a circle of bogus Bohemians, not one of whom had ever broken a commandment in his life, though they all eagerly and

noisily intimated that they had broken all ten. Of the men, Cleve, helped by his year of army experience, could fairly set down some for knaves and some for fools and some for honest-harmless fellows who might presently abandon all this pinchbeck folly, and take to hard work and common-sense. The girls, spite of their insistent cheap daring, he detected to be of unimpeachable character; once he sent one of them into tears of rage and mortification by the conjecture that she came from Keokuk, Iowa, and was probably a member of the Central Methodist Church! "You—you—you insulting *yokel!*!" she spluttered furiously; she was about nineteen years old. "Why, what's the matter?" said Cleve, in vast inward delight, but keeping a countenance of innocent concern. "Aren't there nice people in Keokuk?" There was an odd kind of disconcerted silence in the stuffy room with its litter of stagey studio properties, and one or two of the men eyed him suspiciously. Years afterward Cleve would recall the scene with a chuckle.

This detachment may have worked against him in his trade; he was an outlaw in this land of self-styled outlawry, refusing to learn its language, subscribe to its cults, take part in its hectic advertising; they did not know what to make of him. He labored in an isolation as complete as it had been aforetime at home, and his writing reflected it. In six months he made a sale here and there, but—"Your work, while admirable, we find is not general enough in its appeal," one editor wrote him. Cleve, as always in like circumstances, put the manuscript aside until he should be visited by a better inspiration; but it did not occur to him to cultivate a style of work which would make a "general appeal." Rightly or wrongly he construed that to mean the style in

which ninety-nine people out of a hundred were writing; and Cleve was still resolute to drink out of his own cup.

Meanwhile he was getting low in pocket; and following his unorthodox bent, did not consider borrowing, or sending home, or calling on the pawn-broker, or ending his life like a twentieth-century Chatterton, or in fine conforming to any other of the classic Grub-Street standards of behavior. No, if literature fails, there is always the wood-pile! Starving to death in a garret was all stuff and nonsense in Mr. Harrod's stalwart opinion; nobody needed to starve who could get a job in a Sunshine Bakery! Possibly he could have found something more exalted to do, if he had been willing to use the fact of being an ex-service man as a lever; but his crooked pride would not allow of that. And it may be said here that the problem of the unemployed, according to Cleve Harrod, was simply a problem of those who did not want to be employed, or preferred unemployment to taking whatever work offered. He himself had very little difficulty and was never menaced with the bread-line.

It was not a bakery where he ultimately landed, however, but a minor restaurant in the neighborhood of Thirty-fourth street, on the edge of the theatre district; and here Cleve was not cashier—which had been his courtesy title on Albemarle Street—but door-man, occasionally waiter, and more often bartender. Prohibition supervened about this time, and in the frescoed and be-mirrored retreat with the swinging shutter-doors, which doubled the restaurant on one side, there were served only lemonade and other innocuous beverages; Cleve would be called upon to dispense these, and if anything else was asked for and obtained in certain discreet alcoves to

the rear, he knew enough to know nothing whatever! Outside of his own bailiwick, bounded on the one hand by the coffee-urn, on the other by the soda-fountain, who so blind and deaf as he? "Y'ain't paid to mind th' other fella's business, see?" Mr. Heilbronner advised, fixing him with a bright, acute and active eye.

"Sure!" responded Cleve heartily, and dreadful to relate, unmolested by a single qualm on the score of morals. Was he his brother's keeper, or Heilbronner's, or anybody's? He took his thirty dollars a week, got a supply of white jackets and aprons, tended bar, wrote down orders, called taxis—once in a while helping to stow therein some gentleman more or less the worse for Heilbronner's alcoves—lent a hand to stacking the chairs and tables and pulling down the iron shutters, and went home to his lodgings and to bed with the clearest conscience in the world. He would maintain that the work was not hard—that is, not particularly hard—late hours, of course; but Heilbronner did not serve breakfast, so mornings were free until ten o'clock. He had his Sundays, and always managed to do some writing. It was incomprehensible, incredible with what peace of mind he pursued a calling which his Uncle John—and almost anybody else for that matter—would have pronounced not without some justification to be even less than humble; but it never entered Cleve's head to be ashamed of what he was doing or to apologize for it. To be sure, he wrote his mother and the family in rather vague and guarded terms; but that was because he was in fear of their bestirring themselves on his behalf with those efforts which were so well-intentioned, so woefully unwelcome.

Heilbronner's Café differed from the Frying

Pans, the Green Trees, the Andy's and the Pot-o'-Teas of the would-be Latin Quarter by being in no slightest degree picturesque and furthermore by making no bid for picturesque patronage. It had the composition-floors, the white-and-gilt decorations, the crowded small tables and bent-wood chairs of a thousand other restaurants; it was fairly clean and the cooking was fairly good, but there was no one dish preëminent, a specialty; and in spite of the alcoves, it was respectable. Taken all together these facts demonstrate the impossibility of making a cult of Heilbronner's; the cult-mongers automatically, so to speak, avoided it, so that Cleve seldom saw any of his acquaintances. He was not sorry; there was, at least, nothing meretricious about the café and its customers. The young man found this atmosphere of the unabashed commonplace refreshing and wholesome; he had the insight to perceive that it was true to our national life and spirit, and the sturdy good taste to like it all the better. The other exotic nonsense represented nothing American; it was a feebly exaggerated imitation of something alien, itself of doubtful authenticity. The noon-day crowd at Heilbronner's was made up of clerks from the neighboring department-stores, decorators', milliners' and modistes' establishments; there would be salesmen from the real-estate offices sometimes with clients; commuters' wives in town for the day's shopping, matinée-going girls, children being taken to dancing-school or the dentist; and always of course a liberal percentage of visiting strangers from all parts of the country, every one indefinitely typical of his section. Cleve thought these sane, plain, busy, purposeful average Americans were a hundred times more interesting, more worthy of sympathetic study than all the fake

artists, fake philosophers, fake wits and fake revolutionaries between Washington Square and the two rivers.

He got into the habit of playing a little game with himself, laying wagers that he could guess correctly in three trials or even only one what state a visitor hailed from, what he did at home, and what was his business in New York. Yonder stout, energetic man, for instance, looked as if he might be a manufacturer in a small way down east somewhere; say he had a stocking-mill or a cannery in the neighborhood of Fall River. The tall one with the cane—oh, that's easy! An actor right here in New York City—Subway Circuit, most likely—not a celebrity, you understand. Watch him hand his hat to the girl, watch him sit down (*r. u.!*) and open his napkin with a gesture nicely adapted from Mr. John Drew whom, indeed, he distantly resembles. The fatigued nervous gentleman with the youngish-oldish face who pulls out his watch and frowns at it and puts it back and drums with his fingers on the table, keeping a lookout towards the door, and anon consults his watch again and so *da capo*—why, he's an assistant instructor of chemistry, romance-languages or what-not in from Princeton or New Haven, waiting for his wife. And here she comes, by George! See him half rise and try to catch her eye! Mr. Harrod could not be certain, of course, whether he won or lost at this ingenious gambling; sometimes his curiosity was sufficiently aroused to suborn the hat-check girl into taking note of the trade-mark inside the unconscious subject's hat or overcoat, and he had days of startling luck, other days that left him penniless—theoretically. He confined his Monte Carlo exercises to the men guests; the women, Cleve would have freely admitted, baffled

him; they were too nearly standardized in dress and manner.

It was one of the first chilly days in the fall that his counter was approached by a young man and girl who had to wait their turn at the far end, so lively was the demand for hot bouillon and chocolate; Cleve was too busy for his private recreation and scarcely gave them a look until the moment of serving. "Bride and groom—out of town—Toledo, Kankakee and points West!" he thought with metropolitan levity, even as he was asking—in the vernacular which he studiously employed—"What's yours?"

"Want some clam broth?" the young man said to his companion. "They say it's strengthening."

"Oh, I don't know—it's so kind of fishy. Anyway I get tired of thinking about being careful all the time. You got cocoa? I mean for the same price?" She fixed on Cleve a pair of the bluest blue eyes he had ever seen—blue like sapphires, blue like the luminous glass urns of old in the druggists' windows, he said to himself. He stared half a second with his hand on the faucet before he could answer, shoving the diminutive rate-card towards her.

"'Marshmallow, ten. Whipp' cream, fifteen,'" she read aloud. "I guess marshmallow's all right—",

"Aw, five cents! Take the whipp' cream, it'll be good for you."

"Well, I will if you will!"

Cleve left them squabbling affectionately, and when he returned from waiting on another customer, and informing still another that they could probably "take care of him back there," the couple had decided for the more expensive concoction—"And some of those sandwiches in those wax-paper wrap-

pers like all the places have. You got 'em too, haven't you?" the young man was ordering when he all at once broke off, ejaculating with an abrupt change of voice and manner, a change indicative both of pleasure and profound surprise: "Why, sa-ay! Well, Gee! Well, how's the boy? Well, sa-ay—!"

It was George. He looked much older, but it was indubitably George. His figure had not yet lost the military carriage, though clothed in a civilian sack-suit, finished off with tan shoes and an out-of-season straw hat. It was the newly-acquired clusters of fine lines raying out from the corners of his eyes that gave the illusion of added years, for otherwise his face was the same, with a sole-leather tint tempering the old-time sallowness. He spoke his own name and Cleve's, grinning and friendly, putting out a lean hand unfamiliarly hard and browned. "You recollect me? Say, I got your letter."

Cleve, to his own surprise, found himself as much pleased as the other, and as incoherent; he shook hands cordially. "Gee! Gosh! Say! I wasn't looking or I'd have known you right off!"

The next clients waited with patience, looking from one young man to the other, touched, amused, needing no explanations. They did not have to wait long; business is business and New York is New York. Cleve went back to his faucets, manoeuvring automatically while the words of greeting were still on his lips; and Tarvey was finishing the cocoa and making ready to move on, as he said: "Well, s'long! Only, say, we got to fix it up so's to see each other somewhere when you get your time off. Meet my sister. 'S my old side-partner back home."

She nodded at Cleve over the cup of steaming hot drink, gazing rather hard with her great aquama-

rine eyes; they were set off by delicately shadowed lids, an uncannily fine tapering line of eyebrow, and a seashell complexion all of which it might be guessed, unlike the eyes, formed no part of the young lady's natural equipment. "Pleased to meet you," she murmured between swallows, and nibbled swiftly at her sandwich, still gazing.

They went and sat down at one of the tables to finish; but in a momentary cessation of Cleve's activities, George ran over to him again to make an appointment for the next Sunday. He gave an address in Brooklyn, and Cleve got a confused impression of some further information; they might not be there long, George couldn't say; he was just looking around. And wasn't it lucky their happening to drop in here this way? It just happened so, you know, they might just as well have gone into any other lunch place, and likely as not if they had Cleve and he would never have met again—though the world was a pretty small place after all, wasn't it? Well, so long! And don't slip up on that date now! He raced back to Miss Tarvey, and wagged a facetious signal of adieu as they left.

CHAPTER V

CLEVE was in no danger of "slipping up on his date" with the Tarveys; he sought them out Sunday afternoon faithfully, though still wondering within him at his own interest. It might be laid in part to mere loneliness; and then George's companionship had always somehow entertained him. Reviewing their Albemarle Street association, he decided that this sister must be "Soph" alias "the kid," the one who was at the Lyric and later took to the stage with the *Boardwalk Belles*; her appearance bore out the latter surmise, at any rate. She was a pretty girl—and without doubt a nice girl too, make-up and all, he told himself with prodigious shrewdness; *he* knew something about women! Was there ever a young man of twenty-four or so who didn't know something about women? But even if he had not been so experienced and infallible, he would have reached the same conclusion concerning any sister of George's. Cleve remembered what care the latter had always seemed to take of "the kid"; obviously he was still taking care of her, and nobody knew how much she owed to that brotherly intervention. There was something very solid and likeable about George. And did anyone ever behold such an extraordinary pair of blue eyes?

As it fell out, Mr. Harrod did not behold them again that Sunday, to his disappointment; purely as a matter of curiosity, of course, he would have

liked another view. He arrived at the street of narrow, dingy, four-story-and-basement houses, and succeeded in identifying Number Twenty-one's unkempt area-way and high stoop from the precisely similar area-way and stoop on either side of it by the sign "Furnished Rooms." Numbers Nineteen and Twenty-three housed respectively a barber-shop and laundry in the basement, a tailor and an artist in "Human Hair Goods" on the first floor, a taxidermist and a teacher of saxophone, guitar, banjo and ukelele playing—where one might also obtain the services of Joey's Marimba Band, it was advertised—on the second, and so on up to the very roof. No accommodations there for transient visitors such as he inferred the Tarveys must be. There were cloudy-hued lace curtains behind Number Twenty-one's cloudy windows; a white stoneware pitcher stood on one of the sills; elsewhere dead, dry, desiccating little plants in boxes and tin cans, pairs of stockings and other undergarments of even more intimate character embellished the façade. It resembled that of Cleve's own rooming-house; and when he went up the steps and pulled at the bell and a shuffling elderly man opened to him there issued a gust of the same tepid air to which he was accustomed, freighted with the same commingled, yet distinguishable, odors of the cellar, the sewer, the alley, of dust and gas, of orange-peel and dish-water and damp carpets and ancient frying. George came downstairs with his overcoat and hat.

"There ain't much place to talk here. I thought we could walk around outside," he said, adding in explanation of this seeming inhospitality, "I haven't any room to myself, I'm in with another fellow. And Soph's not feeling the best ever—I guess it's this weather or something—so I can't

take you up there. She told me her best regards and for you to try it again."

"I'm sorry," said Cleve—and he meant it. "I was hoping to see her."

"Well, it'll have to be for another time. Oh, she isn't *sick*—not real *sick*, you know. She'll be all right as soon as it clears up a little. It's this kind of raw wind that gets her; but she'll be all right, she's not *sick*," the brother reiterated vehemently, with a kind of anxious challenge as if he both dared and feared contradiction. "This is one hell of a climate anyhow," he grumbled, "you never know what's coming next, so you can't dress according. She caught cold; she catches cold awful easy. Well—you see how we're fixed. I thought you and I could walk around outside a little."

Cleve agreed willingly, and they went down the steps and strayed along side by side, silence and awkwardness falling upon them abruptly after the fashion incidental to the revival of an acquaintance; perhaps each one was rather startled to discover how little he actually knew of the other.

"Have a cigarette?" Cleve suggested at last, after searching his mind in vain for small talk, shop talk, any sort of talk.

"Thanks, I ain't got any myself."

They got the tobacco going, and Tarvey volunteered that he hadn't been smoking lately; he didn't like to when Soph was around; it made her throat hurt; and there wasn't much fun going off and smoking by yourself, let alone it runs into money.

"Well, you smoked all the time over there, I guess. We did here."

"Whenever we got the chance. There isn't anything else feels so good sometimes," said George,

drawing and expelling the smoke with great contentment. And after another silence—but a much more companionable one this time—he said: "You didn't get over?"

"No."

"And went right in at the start, too! Gee! Well, I had all I wanted of it," said Tarvey. "Not that I got any kick. It was all right and the U. S. just naturally *had* to go in," he added quickly. "I had it easy alongside some of 'em. Cooking, you know. I told you, didn't I?"

"Yes, but you mixed into the fighting——?"

George admitted that he had. "Yeah. Some," were his exact words. "When did they leave you go home?"

"It will be a year next January. When did you?"

"Not till last Spring—April. That is, I had my papers, but I didn't get back right off. We had to wait around quite some while 'count of the transports getting all balled up."

Cleve uttered some strictures on that and various other branches of the Government service coupled with opprobrious references to red tape. "Everybody expected to have trouble getting over, but you'd think they could have managed to ferry the boys home all right as long as it was all over and no submarines to worry about."

"They did the best they could, I guess," said George leniently. "Person got up against lots of things you never thought of before in the War. It kinda interfered with everybody all over. Nothing's the same at home any more, you musta noticed that."

"I haven't been home," said Cleve, bluntly, embarrassed by what all at once seemed to be a piece

of behavior not quite creditable, needing explanation. Indeed, George looked at him with visibly quickened interest, but not at all in a critical spirit, as his next speech showed.

"Haven't you? Been here? Been on that restaurant job ever since?"

Cleve briefly sketched his New York career, omitting certain features of it, as may well be imagined, and winding up with the last two months at Heilbronner's. The other listened with a manner oddly attentive and preoccupied at once, as if questions or difficulties of his own were milling together in his mind during the recital. "Uh-huh," he articulated thoughtfully at the end. "Well—" he paused, hesitating or considering. "It's a good enough place, ain't it? Could they use another man there? In the kitchen—? Or anywhere, as far as that goes? I can do pretty nearly anything round any eating place."

"Why, I don't know—I—well, I could ask 'em anyhow, if you—"

"I'm looking for something," George explained unnecessarily. The look of anxiety settled on his face; all at once he began some troubled confidences. "You see, it's like this. Things ain't just the same with me as they was on Albemarle Street in the old Sunshine. Oh, I don't mean anything's wrong, only—I've been working, you know, I got a job day or so after I struck the old town. I've got *some* money. It don't go as far as it used to, that's where you lose out, no difference if you make twicet as much. Things costs so much more. I got enough to run us for a spell yet, but I'd ought to be doing something. Soph, you know— I got to get her fixed somehow."

"I thought she was—I thought you said she had—" Cleve was venturing uncertainly, when the other began again, fluent in the relief of addressing a masculine understanding.

"You see, it's this way. Everything's different for her and me. First place, while I was away, Mother died," he said, making this statement with the bleak simplicity of his class. "She'd been sick off and on for years—long as I can recollect—so she died. Well, that sort of left Ella to herself, and she was doing some of this canteen-work or something on that order—they paid her and she was around more or less where the troops was and I guess she didn't put in a bad time first and last cooking for the boys and having 'em josh her about how good she could do it, and take her to the pitcher-shows and all. Well, anyways! First thing you know, she gets married to one of 'em!" Here George permitted himself a wintry, fraternal grin. "Wouldn't that knock you! Marries him! And her every day of thirty! He's younger a whole lot, I'm pretty sure. But there was lots of that going on wherever the army was—you know. Well, anyways! Here I come home and there wasn't much home left. Ella and him were nice enough, but they didn't want *me* sticking round; why would they? Soph was off on the road all this while, and Ella kinda got outa touch with her, seems like; she just never seemed to think of Soph, where she was or anything. Well then, I got a job cooking for a construction-camp on some work they was doing on the river—those locks between Cincinnati and Louisville and on down, you know. Then along towards the last of the summer I heard from Soph, and the damn show had gone on the rocks up at Massillon, and the manager he'd

skipped out with whatever funds there was—they hadn't been paid in I don't know how long anyhow—and she was sick in a hospital up there."

He went on to describe how he had dropped work to go to the rescue; and had brought her down and taken her to one of the hospitals at home where she made a slow recovery—he did not say from what, though "bronikle tubes" and "this here 'flu'" appeared in the course of his talk. It was plentifully starred with expletives, for the fact that his sister should be ill or suffer at all George seemed to resent too fiercely for temperate language. The manager of the "show," the "show" itself, the hard practices of one-night stands, Soph's own carelessness, the "damn-fool doctors"—all came in for bitter denunciation. "She don't cough scarcely at all any more, though. She's getting over it. I don't know why they always want to scare you to death," he insisted, on the same note of resolute yet uneasy cheerfulness that, as Cleve noticed, sounded whenever he spoke of her.

"Well, then, one of the pill-slingers that had a little more sense than the rest, he said she'd ought go and stay in the country on a farm for the fresh air and eat eggs and milk and all things like that. It sounded pretty good to me, so I hunted round and found a place for her to stay with some folks out near Milford. It was real nice. They had chickens, you know, and green corn and this vine with blue and white flowers, morning-glories they called 'em, all over the porch—it was real nice," George repeated a little wistfully; "but Soph couldn't seem to get used to it somehow. She's used to more going on, you know. It made her lonesome. The minute she begun to feel better she got restless."

Her restlessness resulted in his resigning from

the construction-camp and seeking new fields. "I don't claim to be any chef, but my cooking ain't so worse at that, and I thought maybe I could get a place at one of these outdoor clubs or vacation places. It would be in the country, of course, and I figured I could board her somewheres in the neighborhood and see her every day if I didn't maybe board there myself, and it would be kinda livelier for her. She's nothing but a kid and they got to have *some* fun," said George who must have reached the advanced age of twenty-four or -five. He wagged his head wisely and fell silent.

"Well, did it work out that way?" Cleve asked.

Tarvey made a humorous wry face. "Oh yes, it did not!" said he in ironic levity. "For one reason, I never gave it a real good try-out. Just you think up how many clubs and camps there is round home; just you name 'em. The answer is ought, decimal point, double ought." And as Cleve opened his mouth to combat this assertion or offer some qualification of it, the other anticipated him. "Oh, I know they've got half a dozen of these golf-links; but that's not what I mean. I don't mean anything fancy or for the society crowd; they wouldn't have any use for *me*. I was thinking of these rest-up places, the go-out-and-stay-over-Sunday kind, like they have along the Miami and back around Newtown and Batavia. Come to look 'em up, they was all fixed up already with a man and his wife taking care of 'em generally. The woman cooked and he cleaned up the machines and the skiffs and gardened and loafed a whole lot, I guess, and there was always a bunch of kids that they made run errands and kinda be handy around. *They* didn't have any use for a single man like me, either. Well, then, that left the regular road-houses——" he made a

liberal gesture. "All right for *me*. I'm not choose-y. There was considerable rough-stuff on that order over in France. But I take Soph out and put her up in a red-light district like around a road-house, don't I?" Mr. Tarvey fell back upon the form of words he had used before. "Don't I? Oh yes, I do not! So there you are!"

In fact there was a finality about the situation, as he set it forth, that defeated argument. "You surely were up against it good and hard," Cleve said, and the other nodded with a slight appreciative grunt, staring moodily ahead of him. They walked for a while in silence. The early October twilight was closing in, with a perceptible sharpening of the wind already cold and cutting; now and then it whiffed a handful of dry, stinging, gritty dust into their faces. The street-lamps and electric light signs sprang to life. "Better start back, hadn't we?" shouted Cleve above the clangor of a passing trolley-car.

Tarvey nodded assent, and they wheeled with the mechanical precision of a drill that each supposed himself to have forgotten—indeed, the young fellows asked nothing better than to forget it and everything connected with it; but so strong is habit that they kept step together and moved their arms in rhythm unconsciously. At this hour the side-walks filled with people and there was a good deal of crowding and dodging; it was scarcely the time or place for confidences, nevertheless Tarvey kept on with only an occasional break when they had to cross the street, or thread their way through a phalanx of citizens descending from or waiting for a car. Cleve lost some of it here and there but the gist of the other's talk was that after an exhaustive survey of conditions at home, he had decided to try

his luck in New York which, aside from being immeasurably bigger with opportunities proportionately more numerous, possessed extra advantages which he rather vaguely indicated. It was more "up to date"; it would suit Soph fine—all except the rotten climate which after all wasn't any worse than the climate of the Ohio city, and if he got a job down Long Island way, or up in the mountains—a person was so much *nearer* to everything here, you see—

"Sure! There ought to be enough country-clubs around here, if that's what you're after, to fix you up easy. Lots of 'em would be grabbing for you, if they knew," said Cleve with all the enthusiasm he could muster; but his companion looked doubtful.

"Yeah, I've been around to the employment-offices. Nothin' doin' so far, though. It's the time of year—winter coming along; people aren't so keen about being outdoors, and lots of places they close 'em up if they ain't using 'em enough to pay. Everything costs so thundering high. I oughta thought about it, and got started sooner," he said, the anxious furrow deepening between his brows. "I wish you'd ask the boss where you're working. You'd just as leave, wouldn't you? It don't hurt to ask; he can't do no worse than say no."

Cleve warmly promised co-operation, and they parted at the corner near Number Twenty-one with many assurances on both sides of meeting again soon. But, as not infrequently happens in New York—and elsewhere—time went steadily by, and Cleve heard and saw nothing more of his former associate. The truth was he made no effort that way. To begin with, Heilbronner, when Cleve approached him, had no opening in the kitchen or other departments, and there was no particular point in passing

on this disheartening news to George; on the contrary, silence seemed the part of kindness. Several times Cleve thought of the blue eyes and said to himself that he must make another visit to Brooklyn; he would go this next Sunday. But when this next Sunday arrived, there was always something to be done—work that he had been planning all week, making notes in a ratty little memorandum book he carried with him for the purpose, and used to study, hanging to a strap in the subway, as he travelled to and from his soda fountain. Again it would be something new he had laid out mentally and was on fire to execute, get down on paper before it left him; who knows whether it would ever come back, or that he could recapture the first fine, elusive flight of words? Or it would be a better rendering that he sought; some line, paragraph, chapter must be written over, perhaps the whole structure altered. Toiling, the young man forgot that there were Tarveys and rooming-houses and cafés in the universe; yet there were moments when he honestly regarded himself as a spectacle both sad and silly. Grant that he succeeded this time—an almost improbable, untenable thesis, but grant it, say that he sold his writing, made a name, put money in his purse, would that satisfy him? No, it would be to do over again with the same urgency, the same trial of flesh and spirit. Why could he not renounce the futile and interminable effort? He did not know. He saw himself spending a lifetime behind Heilbronner's counter, mixing fruit sundaes by day, polishing sonnets by night, until he should be bald, bearded, doddering! He had the grace to laugh at the vision.

However, a lifetime at Heilbronner's was, as presently developed, exactly what he was not to have the chance to spend. Heilbronner's, as a business en-

terprise, was nearing its own term, woe and alas! The pitcher that goes to the well once too often is broken at the last, and conversely the well that awaits the pitcher too persistently may risk running dry. The alcoves must have been to blame—the alcoves and some snake-in-the-grass of a plain-clothes detective. One fine day the shutters were up, the police in possession, somebody furnished bail for Heilbronner and his book-keeper; the small fry, maids, waiters, 'bus-boys and so on, including Mr. Cleveland Harrod, got off with a subpoena to appear in court and tell what they knew; and, heaviest tragedy of all, within a fortnight—the law acting with unexampled celerity—what barrels and bottles of good, comforting liquor went gurgling down the sewers! We are a virtuous public and there shall be no more cakes and ale.

This untoward event left the hero, young Mr. Harrod, without means of support other than the remarkably long, strong nether limbs which he very nearly walked off, searching another job. It was verging on the feast of Thanksgiving, winter had already set in, and there was little demand for the kind of service he had been supplying at the café, to say nothing of the fact that his connection with the Heilbronner case, which had been awarded some space in the public prints, was not everywhere looked upon as a recommendation. "On your way, Jack! We don't do any boot-legging round here!" one Sixth Avenue restaurateur growled at him severely.

"Do I look like a boot-legger?" Cleve remonstrated.

"How do I know? I ain't said I ever see one!" retorted the other neatly. "You ask the Federal judge. *He* knows."

"All I meant was that they don't pick 'em my size and weight to do boot-legging. I'd be too easy spotted," said Cleve grinning, whereat the incorruptible one, after a moment's scrutiny, grinned too in a friendlier mood.

"How tall are you anyway?" he inquired.

"Six feet, one."

"Some muscle, too, I guess. Well, I don't need a dock-walloper, either," said the other conclusively. "On your way!"

Cleve obeyed; and later encountering a good many more rejections in varying styles, began to consider those walks of life wherein this self-same size and muscle might stand him in better stead than heretofore. Why not? At this date, manual labor was earning—or at least receiving—a wage beside which that of the average professional worker was negligible; Cleve reminded himself of the fact with irony. Nor were skill, experience and training embarrassingly essential; nobody needed to learn a trade when the opulence of janitors, switch-men, day-laborers furnished stock jokes for every comic journal in the country. The main obstacle to joining their ranks, as Cleve speedily found out, was that these gentry one and all belonged to very zealously guarded unions; not lightly and unadvisedly as a pastime, nor yet soberly in the need for bread and meat, might a man take pick in hand and aspire to a place in the nearest gang of ditch-diggers; it was a matter for union-cards, union-buttons, union-dues. He did pick up a job for two or three days at a time, running the elevator in a warehouse, shifting scenery at the *Molière*, Delmar's theatre, driving a motortruck and what-not; the muscles ached famously when he came back to his lodgings at night tired out and dirty, with the appetite of a wolf; but

the unaccustomed physical exercise agreed with him better than the intervals of enforced idleness. He hardened on it; and in after years would contend that no occupation was so conducive to literary activity as that of slithering a ton or so of merchandise in bales from point to point by means of hand-hooks all day long; while your body attended to its duties automatically, your mind could be voyaging off anywhere.

It chanced that his final day with the motor before surrendering it to the lawful operator who had been obliged to lay off with a carbuncle under one knee, was spent at the West Street docks delivering consignments to outgoing steamers. Cleve was fairly familiar with the city's water-front; it had for him the perennial attraction of every water-front for every artist, and he had passed more than one off day amongst the wharves and Noah Ark's collections of goods and men and beasts, so that he found his way about and discharged his loads with notable efficiency—a “dock-walloper” in good earnest, he said to himself with a laugh. There were some small iron castings for the *Fort Victoria* of the Great Britain and Colonial Steam Packet Company, plying between New York and the Bermuda Islands; she lay at her pier out of ballast, looking oddly tall, narrow and unstable; and the upper levels of the wharf-house by which one reached the docks were all but blocked with the trunks of prospective passengers. Everyone in the United States was bound for Bermuda to pass the winter in that mild-aired and charming spot outside the three-mile limit. This, at all events, was the purser's semi-humorous theory propounded as he filled out and stamped and handed over the vouchers. Cleve had the curiosity to ask him if it was always like this?

"Always at this time of year—only everybody says it's worse this winter on account of the War over and Prohibition and everything. In the summer they have excursions—the round trip and stay a couple of days—takes about a week in all and they make a low rate, so sometimes there's quite a rush. But the excursion-crowd don't generally carry any baggage, just grips that they can handle themselves and not have to pay anybody," said the purser, not without a certain amiable contempt. "They don't give much trouble for their seventy-five dollars."

He lounged with arms folded on the shelf within the grated window, taking his ease in a mid-day moment of respite, and chattily inclined. He had to lounge for there was nowhere to sit down; besides himself the official den contained a safe, a filing-cabinet, a cuspidor, and on one wall a map of the Island of Bermuda and its outlying reefs. All these objects, including the purser himself, were fitted each to its place as exactly as an oyster to its shell, with the sea-worthy precision displayed in every part of a ship that inevitably tickles a landsman's imagination; Cleve felt the spell and lingered.

"Seventy-five? Does that take in everything?"

"Yes, meals and berth—whole business—leaving out the time you're on the Island, of course. It's reasonable, considering. The Company doesn't stand to lose on the table-board, to be sure. It's pretty sure to be rough going or coming back, sometimes both ways. And when it *is* rough—*Good night!*" said the purser with satanic mirth. "If the tourists get by with one meal, they're in luck!"

"Ever sick yourself?"

"*Me?* No! I'm too used to it. I live in Bermuda—born there. Of course I've been in the States a good deal," said the purser. In fact, save for a

barely perceptible alien accent, supposedly British since Bermuda is a British possession, he might have passed for a citizen of "the States" anywhere, though he would probably have resented the inference with the aggressive loyalty of all Great Britain's colonial subjects. "Thinking of going down?" he inquired.

"Oh no—just asking," said Cleve and was turning away, when the other's next words arrested him.

"It didn't use to be so much," he explained; "but everything's gone up, and we've got to keep even. We pay our stewards twice what we used to, on top of their berth and keep and allowance for the uniform, and all they pick up from the passengers—the winter crowd, of course. And we're short-handed at that, most of the time. We're advertising now."

"Hey?" said Cleve alertly.

The ship's officer motioned towards a broadside posted up with gummed labels just outside the door of his cubby-hole. "There's notices in the papers too," said he, looking Cleve over with the eye of a recruiting-sergeant. "We're sailing Saturday."

The upshot of this haphazard encounter, as may have been foreseen, was that Cleve "signed on"—a nautical sounding term which he repeated inwardly with comic relish—with the Great Britain and Colonial Steam-Packet Company, S. S. *Fort Victoria*, forthwith. He was not a little surprised at the comparative ease, expedition and informality with which a stewardship could be secured, but concluded that the marine department of domestic service was hampered as were all departments of domestic service on dry land these days, by a scarcity of applicants and exorbitant demands as to wages. *He* was not exorbitant, not he! He accepted the emoluments

of stewardry, eighteen dollars a week and "found" as recited above, without another thought. "I never knew before that my face was my fortune," he remarked when the transaction was completed. The purser looked perplexed for an instant, then he smiled.

"'Fortune' is right!" he said sententiously. "I'll take a chance on you anyhow. The police are on the job down in Bermuda same as in New York."

"*Police?*" echoed Cleve. "Why, I—I thought it was a—a jungle down there. In the tropics, you know—?"

The purser advised him somewhat tartly to forget it! "Bermuda's not in the tropics. I don't know why so many people take that for granted. It's about as much of a jungle as Long Island. I know every foot of it."

"Oh! Well, I thought it was in the tropics," Cleve murmured, hazily disappointed. The mirage of palms, pirates and lagoons floating before his mind's eye, dissolved incontinently. "Isn't it tropical in places?" he persisted.

"Well, we never have frost," the Bermudan conceded grudgingly. "Just wait till you get there. You'll like it."

The next twenty-four hours Mr. Harrod spent getting acquainted with his new duties, as far as might be while the ship was in port; when she put to sea he suspected he might be called on for anything and everything, though he was assigned to the deck, rather to his relief. The stateroom and dining-table positions held out terrific possibilities, in the light of what the purser confided to him. At the rear—"aft" as he taught himself to say—opening on the promenade deck was a sort of lounge with wicker chairs and tables, immediately adjoining the

bar, oh, infinite British sagacity! Cleve was ordered to the assistance of the bar-keeper when that functionary came on board late Friday afternoon, and here for the first time met with a not unreasonable request for credentials. The bar-keeper, as became his office, was a cautious man.

“Ever ‘tended bar? Know anything about it?” he inquired, fixing Cleve with a stern and searching eye.

“*Me?* Do I know anything about it?” said Cleve, appropriately impressive. “Why, I used to be with Heilbronner!” It was equivalent to a Ph.D.

Saturday morning came around optimistically clear and sunny; the baggage was still accumulating, and from eight o’clock on the owners of it began to arrive. Cleve, feeling pleasantly natty and clean in the nice uniform and brass buttons of his new guild after the late experiments in the manual labor line, watched his fellow-stewards and did his best to imitate them, not unsuccessfully on the whole. The lackey’s job, the lackey’s manners; that was the best taste; people wanted a servant waiting on them, they did not want anybody whom they could remotely suspect of belonging to their own class, he thought, fetching and carrying among the fur wraps and smart valises and bags of golf sticks and expensive small dogs. It was a holiday gathering, well-dressed, well-to-do, bent on enjoyment.

“Nice-looking crowd, aren’t they?” he overheard another steward—another neophyte—comment to his friend the purser in a rare moment of leisure.

“Yeah, but you just wait till we get outside the Narrows,” responded the latter, fiendishly awaiting what seemed to be his favorite entertainment.

Some saddle-horses were brought on below decks during the last half-hour, a few belonging to “pri-

vate parties," as some one informed Cleve, but most of them part of the sporting equipment of some big hotel. The travellers massed along the rail to watch this embarkation which was conducted with rather more care than their own. As animals, the horses were probably superior; they were blooded stock from Kansas and Kentucky and the half-dozen horsey looking experts in charge were well-known stablemen in their horsey world. Cleve, finding himself momentarily without employment in the general interest, craned with the others; he liked horses.

"There's Sultan! There's Sultan!" some young girl at his right cried out, jumping up and down in her excitement. She tried to whistle. "Coo-ee! Coo-eee! Here, look here, Sultan! There, he did! He's looking! I believe he sees us!"

In fact, the horse raised his fine head of a thoroughbred, and scanned inquisitively the towering side of the vessel which must have seemed a monstrous sort of water-growth to Sultan, and the unnatural black hole towards which his groom was gently urging him, and held back, changing feet nervously; he was a beautiful animal. Other passengers glanced from him to the girl smiling, and a stout, bearded gentleman in English tweeds spoke to her in an undertone of mild reproof.

"Gee, that's that girl's horse! They're that swell N'York s'ciety crowd all right," whispered somebody at Cleve's other elbow. He looked around, and the voice exclaimed aloud. "Well, if it isn't Mr. Harrod! It *is* Mr. Harrod, ain't it? Well, of all things!"

Cleve looked down into Miss Sophy Tarvey's blue eyes. They were even larger and more brilliant than he remembered in a face which was a good

deal more pinched but exhibited on the lips and delicately hollowed cheeks the same richness of coloring as before for the same reasons. She was liberally saturated with extract of jasmine, violet, new-mown-hay or what you choose in the way of perfumery; and her knockabout soft hat and sweater and startling plaid skirt cheaply parodied the sporting attire of the fashion magazines and the Fifth Avenue windows in a style to make one's heart ache; but the young man, being a young man, noted none of these details. He took off his steward's cap, flushing and smiling in his surprise, a little embarrassed, for Cleve never could entirely conquer his native shyness.

"Of all things!" repeated Miss Tarvey. "Isn't it funny how we keep running into each other all the time? I'll say the world's a small place after all! Meet my friend, Miss Beales."

Cleve shook hands with another pretty girl, who had brown eyes instead of blue ones—and *en passant*, a brunette bloom obviously natural. He asked after George.

"Oh, he's all right, he's on the boat somewhere," explained the sister nonchalantly. "He'll be along directly. You going down, too—oh, you're *on* the ship! What are you, a mate or something?"

"No, no, only a steward—"

"Oh, a steward. I expect you have dandy times," said Miss Tarvey, upon whom the distinction between mates and stewards was manifestly quite lost. "Travelling's lots of fun, there's always something doing. Say, we get out of sight of land, don't we? I should think that would be kind of lonesome, but Miriam says not. Anyway it don't last long, that's one comfort. And looks like there was plenty going on when you get there—to B'muda, I mean. Uh?"

Why, we're going to *stay*—if they don't fire us, that is," she gave her friend a roguish glance. "Uh? Why, George's got a place there—it's with Miriam's father's and mother's hotel that they run. They're on this boat, too. The hotel's name—well, if I ain't forgotten it! Ain't I the bright baby? What's the name, Mirry? You put the tell in hotel, uh?"

The two girls burst into giggles, in which Cleve joined, as gay and excited as they. All three stood and laughed at nothing in sheer lightness of young hearts as the tugs set up a raucous clamor, and the *Fort Victoria* cast off.

PART TWO

PART TWO

CHAPTER I

THE island of Bermuda is situated, as everybody knows, some six or seven hundred miles off our coasts, about on a line with any point in North Carolina; a pleasant seat which nimbly does commend itself to numbers of people of leisure and seekers after diversion as a winter resort—and for other reasons. It is a possession of Great Britain and up to the present writing the principles of Prohibition have not obtained there. Indeed, the island must of necessity hold out extra attractions else few would be so hardy as to attempt it. The passage—two days from the nearest United States port—is a pretty stiff one; weekly during the season—which covers the months of January, February and March—shiploads of wan phantoms are discharged upon the quay at Hamilton Harbor and stagger up to the customs counter, strengthless, uttering ineffectual murmur like the population that flutters along the slopes of Avernus. Later on with the arrival of spring and warm weather, one might suppose a milder sea; but there is no telling. The boats ply less frequently on account of the diminishing crowd of pilgrims; and these debark nine times out of ten in the same forlorn array, feebly referring their condition to the activities of the Gulf Stream, as did the earlier ones.

It would be a comfort to the wave-worn visitor if the island set out a stalwart hill or two upon the horizon, embodying the strength and friendliness and above all the admirable immobility of dry land; but Bermuda and its little archipelago are spread upon the ocean like a piece of embroidery; it is a very sketch of an island, frail and pretty as a Victorian water-color with a fancifully blue sea, white gables emerging theatrically on hillsides massed with green, gulls and fishing-smacks slanting on the wind as in a thousand portfolios of 1850. A long forenoon the steamer works down the reefy coast and back up again as it threads the tortuous channel to Hamilton, opening a succession of these petty and charming pictures that only need a gilt frame and modest price-ticket in one corner to complete the illusion of artifice.

One spring morning not long ago, the *Fort George*, two days out from New York on next to her last trip for the season was ploughing along on this final lap; they had picked up the pilot somewhere off Kitchen Shoals; the luggage was mounded on the decks and through all the passages below; the sparse congress of passengers was aligned by the rail—such of them as could stand, that is. Sundry lead-colored victims of the Gulf Stream were distributed about the deck-chairs, weakly pecking at a breakfast tray here and there. It seemed to them the low shores, the buoys and channel posts and comb-like ridges of coral reef filed by interminably. A native Bermudan, a ship-chandler of St. George, returning from a pleasure-jaunt to New York, expounded what he called the points of interest as they passed: the Government coaling-ship, the observation-tower on the highest elevation in the islands, the dockyards distantly visible at St. George—

"Isn't that where you live? I thought you said that was where you lived?" somebody interrupted him accusingly.

"I do, but I've got to go to Hamilton just the same. Hardly any steamers put in at St. George except for repairs or supplies, you know—"

"Yeah, I know," said the other directing upon him and around a look divided between commiseration and contempt. "That's English for you! Anybody else would land first place they come to, but English—why, it's not *done*, y'know! They've been landing in this cart-before-the-horse way ever since time began, so they can't possibly do otherwise. Bermuda would just naturally break loose and float off if anybody acted any different from what his grandfather did. You've got to go all the way down the length of the island and all the way back again, according to that map in the cabin—what's that shining over there? On top of that hill? It looks like a pane of window-glass, with the sun on it, only it's too big."

The native glanced. "That's a rain-shed," said he indifferently, and then, glancing a second time: "It must be the one for the Hotel St. Leon; that's about where the St. Leon is, down at the bottom of that hill. You can't see it from here." He turned from the hostile critic of British-Bermudan methods and customs—who continued to gaze, fascinated, at the rain-shed—and addressed another fellow-traveler, a little man at his right, with a good-natured grin. "Looks like the voyage hadn't exactly agreed with this gentleman, he's in such a hurry to land. Never miss a meal myself, and the rougher it gets the better I like it," said he with the swagger that invariably accompanies that statement. "There're some things about the way they land you in New

York that I've often thought might be improved on, hey?"

"I'm afraid so," said the little man with a gravity which somehow had the effect of an answering grin. It was puzzling, and the ship-chandler eyed him for a moment debating whether he was in fun or earnest, decided for the former and went on talking with a new interest.

"This your first trip here? I go backwards and forwards a good deal, and I don't remember seeing you before. I didn't this time, for that matter."

"Probably not. I was completely prostrated," the little man confessed shamelessly. "I'm a wretched sailor. Why, yes, this is my first visit to Bermuda. I heard you mention the Hotel St. Leon. We're going to stop there. Do you know anything about it?"

"The St. Leon? Oh, sure! It's a nice place—if you like to be in the country, that is. It's a good way out of Hamilton."

"A good way out?" echoed the little man, his eyes wandering over the far, interlocking links of land and sea, almost on a level. "I shouldn't have thought there would be room. It looks from here as if you had to be pretty careful when you stood in the middle of Bermuda for fear of stepping off into the water one side or the other."

"Oh, it's not so little as all that," said the man from St. George spiritedly, but unoffended; he laughed. In fact, there had been nothing to take offense at in the other's comment; his manner was winningly whimsical and kindly. He was middle-aged, of inconspicuous presence, with a humorous, quiet face, a neat, narrow pepper-and-salt beard trimmed to a point, eye-glasses on a black ribbon. The Bermudan, looking upon him, privately put him

down for some college professor on a vacation; and warming to him inexplicably, volunteered: "My name's Overbridge. You come and see us. It's at St. George, you know—anybody can tell you where. We've always been there. You drive over some day and let us show you the place. You'd be interested. It's full of old relics. You drive over and see us."

"Why, that's very kind of you, Mr. Overbridge. We'll be delighted. My——"

Mr. Overbridge expanded still further. "Is your wife along? So's mine, only she was laid out with the rest. I suppose yours was, too, Mr.——?"

"Cook. My name is Cook," supplied the little man. "Yes, I was about to say my wife is with me. She was very sick, but——"

"It's hard on the ladies," Overbridge said, and mentioned the Gulf Stream sympathetically but from the regal height of one against whom it could not prevail. "There weren't more than fifteen people in the dining-room, counting in the captain and some of the ship's officers at that. Only one lady in the lot, but she was all right, fit as a fiddle—one of the lean, wiry kind that can stand anything. There she is now, over there—the tall, slim one with light hair—*oh!*" He checked himself in some consternation, observing the tall, slim one with light hair to be looking squarely in his direction.

As it appeared, however, she was not looking at him but at his companion, to whom she now made a little signal of salute with one hand, advancing towards them, smiling. Cook mounted the eye-glasses and remarked: "Yes, she's with us. Never had a single qualm, as you say. Very fortunate——" and the lady having by this time got up to them, he said: "Ah, Edith. This is Mr. Overbridge. Mrs. Gherardi."

Mrs. Gherardi nodded and smiled, showing a set of very fine, sound, sharp-looking teeth; she fixed a pair of equally sharp-looking light-blue eyes on Overbridge as she said: "Oh, we've met already. We were among the survivors." She spoke to Cook with relish. "You should have seen us both, splendidly wrestling with and overcoming the corned-beef and cabbage while the ship plunged around. Strong men turned pale—"

"They did!" said Cook with burlesque feeling. "Not to mention the weak ones. Mr. Overbridge has been describing your valor in the handsomest terms—"

"Oh, here now, I meant it," protested the Bermudan gentleman. "Why, I didn't know she was in your party. That *shows* I was in earnest." And mindful of his earlier hospitable impulse he repeated the invitation. "It's a nice drive from where you'll be stopping to St. George—you see the whole island. It's the oldest town in Bermuda, the place the English first settled in, after the Spanish left. There's an old church that everybody goes to see. Some of my people are buried there—my family's been here for over two hundred years, in the same business mostly. You see it's different from the States. We've stayed English—" He went on talking, and Cook went on listening attentively, throwing in a question now and then, his eye-glassed gaze fastened on the other's face. Mrs. Gherardi, after a little, detached herself unobtrusively, sauntering back to her previous station alongside a cluster of deck-chairs.

These chairs were occupied severally by half a dozen natty valises, suit-cases, band-boxes and so on; three or four top-coats of both genders but all of them models of the smart shapelessness in vogue;

a French bulldog tethered by his leash to one of the chair-legs; another Gallic person about thirty-five years old, sedately clad, whom any worldly-wise observer would have immediately assigned to the grade of lady's maid; and finally a blonde lady with a face and figure of doll-like finish and proportions costumed with that unostentatious perfection which may be achieved only at hair-raising expense. Altogether it was an assemblage *de luxe* in the best of taste; some of the passengers rememberd that these others had come down in a deck-suite. The dog bounced up with little noises of excitement and pleasure and affection, planting his forepaws against Mrs. Gherardi's skirt and craning up to her. The blonde lady who was pallidly reclining amongst furs and smelling-bottles and what-not, opened her eyes and made a weak, humorous grimace. "Edith, you are intolerably well. I don't see how you can have the face to be so well!"

"If you'd eat something——? We're inside the reefs now; the boat's perfectly steady."

"Yes, but it's *moving!*" She shook her head feebly, and closed her eyes again, applying the smelling-salts. "If you see Marshall anywhere, tell him I gave our stewardess something, so he doesn't have to," she said presently in a faint voice. Mrs. Gherardi burst out laughing at this thrifty counsel.

"I think you're reviving," she said. "If you want to speak to Mr. Cook yourself, he's there by the rail, talking to a man that lives in Bermuda—or rather the man is talking to *him*—telling him his life-history as I came away."

"They all do that," said Mrs. Marshall Cook, languidly raising her head an inch or two to inspect the man from Bermuda, and sinking back again to the smelling-bottle. "They all do it—everybody always

talks to Marshall and tells him everything. He seems so harmless and sympathetic, you know. *I* say it's one of his tricks, and *he* says he really is interested, as interested as he looks. You notice it when you're traveling with him, especially. Perfect strangers—but they *all* do it."

"Well, being a man, you know. The men are always readier to talk to one another, don't you think?"

"Oh, women, too! *Everybody* talks to him," reiterated the little lady, firmly. "It's getting a good deal warmer, isn't it? Take this heavy fur thing off of me, Celeste, and give me the other, please."

Edith sat down on the foot-rest while this change was being accomplished, and the dog climbed up and settled his head and forelegs across her lap with a grunt of content. She caressed his round head absently, a speculative look fixed on the conversational Mr. Overbridge and the curiously receptive Mr. Cook, one still talking, the other still listening.

"They never get that chummy and confidential with me," she remarked. "Not even on shipboard like this. Yet I'm interested, too. I'd like them to talk."

"They're probably too busy looking at you," her friend suggested. There was no slightest hint of either flattery or sarcasm about the speech; Mrs. Cook had the air of being too well-bred or at any rate too thoroughly seasoned socially to commit any sin so tasteless, and Edith's only answer was a shrug that mutely conveyed ironic acquiescence. Mrs. Gherardi was anything but a pretty woman, a fact of which she appeared to be philosophically aware; if people looked at her it was for some other reason, and possibly she was aware of that also.

The other lady now gave signs of reviving sure

enough; she had discarded the salts and was proclaiming a sharp appetite with increasing sprightliness of tone and manner. "Won't a sandwich and a mug of ale taste good! Mercy, Edith, why don't you show some enthusiasm? Oh, I forgot! Food's no novelty to *you*."

Edith laughed. "Hooray!" she said obligingly. "I'm beginning to be hungry, too," and rose, packing the dog away under one arm. "Let's go and look at Hamilton."

Cook came and joined them, giving an arm to his wife. "Feeling better, Bessie? Behold the main seaport of Bermuda. That's the Cathedral up there. The other big place is the court-house or what we'd call a court-house at home, anyhow. All the palaces are hotels, I think—closed now, of course. It must be quite metropolitan in the season."

Mrs. Cook remarked fastidiously that one might as well be at the Ritz as one of those great showy barns; they were all alike wherever you went, and tiresome beyond words. "If we had come in the season, we'd have been obliged to take a cottage. How hot and white the streets look! But it's not nearly so tropical as I expected—not at all like Havana, for instance. Didn't you think it would look like Havana?"

"Why, yes, I did, somehow. But if you stop to remember, Bermuda is several hundred miles farther north. They don't have frost, of course."

"I suppose in landing we shall have to bore our way through masses of potatoes and Easter lilies and those mammoth onions—"

"No, apparently not," said Mrs. Gherardi, her quick, light, keen eyes ranging along the quay. "I daresay the season is over for them too. What we

shall have to bore through will be the serried ranks of colored Bermudans. Plenty of *them*, anyhow. Do you suppose those roads leading off into the country are shell? The motoring must be good."

"It would be undoubtedly if they had motors," Cook said. "But my friend Mr. Overbridge tells me there's not a car on the island of Bermuda."

The ladies exclaimed in unison: "No automobiles? Oh, impossible! There're automobiles everywhere."

"Everywhere except on Bermuda, it seems. He says there are people on the island who have never seen one—never seen a trolley-car—never seen a steam-car." And, meeting their incredulous and suspicious gaze, he nodded soberly. "Fact. After all, it's easily understood. What would you do with a railroad on a string of coral reefs? There isn't room for such a bulky, obstreperous creature."

They agreed dubiously. "But no motor-cars even! Won't it be funny to get around with nothing but horses the way we used to years ago!"

"They have bicycles. The population is greatly addicted to bicycles, I'm told."

"Oh, *bicycles!*"

There began to be more activity on board. The stewards hovered, ready to pounce; the hatchways rattled open. Along the wharf, a gang of colored dock-hands could be observed standing by with the chicken-run apparatus for landing; the *Fort George* was drawing in fast. Ashore there was not much movement; the crowding and excitement and running to and fro were all on board among the passengers, chittering with their high American voices, eager, restless and expectant. Mrs. Edith Gherardi, for her part, was conspicuously calm, posted by the rail, surveying what could be seen of Bermuda with

a sophisticated detachment. Without doubt she was familiar with many ports and men and cities. Looking down upon the docks she indifferently noted a fair sprinkling of white skirts and bright-hued sweaters, duck trousers, Panamas, amongst the shirt-sleeves and uniforms. A whole herd of bicycles leaned against the crated and barreled merchandise; somebody with a pair of field-glasses focussed on the decks of the *Fort George* obviously expected a fresh arrival or a return; where the streets rose over a hill back of the town she could discern the cross-trees of a telephone or electric-light pole; Bermuda, for all its motorless estate, gave reassuring signs of civilization. There were no palms or cactus in sight so far; the white houses recalled New England rather than either Spain or Great Britain. It looked less foreign than our own California, she reflected.

The landing was accomplished with that easy informality coupled extraordinarily with an observance of rules which always so confounds the travelling American at the entry into every country on this globe, save his own. Mr. Cook's party, even to the bulldog, gave the impression of being old hands at it. Wraps, golf-sticks, valises, wardrobe-trunks and all they got themselves through the crowd in the customs-shed, and captured an officer and opened everything and closed everything with the rapidity and method of long practice. Outside a file of vehicles offering the semblance of half-grown victorias waited decorously. Cook secured two.

"Those do look something like Havana," said his wife. "Don't you remember those little carriages they call *volantes*? What has become of the carry-alls with a canopy-top fringed all around like a four-

poster bed? The ones they used to have at Niagara and all the summer places? Are they extinct, even here?"

"Looks like it. Their ghosts all went South to the Florida resorts, but you don't see them even there any more. Probably a warmer climate has received them," said Cook, looking up and down the street. "Did you ever witness greater order and courtliness? No barkers for the hotels, no insistent gentlemen waiting to guide you all over for a consideration, no excursion-ticket brokers, not a—"

"Not a bite to eat, Marshall, unless we get under way. Is there a wagon for luggage?"

It developed that there was a wagon for luggage; and moreover the tolerably extensive equipment of their party filled it neatly. They were the only guests booked for the Hotel St. Leon. Mrs. Cook's maid and the bulldog set off together, against strenuous protests from the latter, in one carriage; the two ladies settled themselves in the other. Cook paused on the curb to light a cigarette, and doing so observed a short, sallow young man hail the trunks as they were moving off and climb in beside the driver. He turned and shot a glance at Cook and at the carriage where it lingered until it almost became a stare, held by Mrs. Cook's diminutive elegance or the height and style, the sandy hair and slender silhouette of the other lady; then he spoke to their driver as one in authority.

"Guess you'd better go along, Jim. Those folks don't want to take our dust."

Jim went along accordingly; and as the two conveyances crossed, the short youth made a tentative gesture towards his hat, coloring visibly over his sallow face when he met Mrs. Gherardi's eye. He

expeditiously finished off the salute as Cook returned it punctiliously.

“‘Rule Britannia!’” the latter quoted with his elusive grin. “That lad, for a true-born Briton or Bermudan British subject, looks remarkably as if he came from Cornopolis, Iowa. His diction likewise has a familiar sound. ‘My country, ‘tis of thee!’”

“Why, of course he’s an American. Americans are forever drifting about everywhere. There isn’t a place in the world where you don’t run into them. What is that card you have?”

It was a bit of pasteboard shaped and tinted in the likeness of those prodigious onions which take their name from the island; in the middle of it, by way of further decoration, a pretty girl fondled the head of a donkey. Edith amusedly exhibited a twin card.

“Somebody came and stuck it into my hand without saying anything,” she explained. “I don’t know why, unless it was out of sheer good-will. He was gone before I could even offer to pay him.”

“He was no American anyhow. It must be intended merely to advertise the products of Bermuda,” said Cook. “I see it was printed in Norwalk, Connecticut,” he added in a musing tone. “Well, let’s file it away with the rest of our first impressions.”

CHAPTER II

MR. COOK's party, making leisurely progress toward the St. Leon with their victoria and team of horses, discovered with some surprise that this archaic style of transportation was not irksome in Bermuda, whatever its drawbacks elsewhere. To dawdle, or at least to take a reasonable ease, all at once seemed proper to vacation ideals and vacation needs; their advance was slow but purposeful—certainly purposeful enough for people who had no object except to rest and be entertained. At any rate they had no choice; every condition of the journey, be it so slight as passing another vehicle to the left instead of to the right, was an expression in its way of the antique and sedate social order by which Bermuda abided and by which the visitors must likewise abide. "The atmosphere—the figurative atmosphere—is precisely like that of every other British possession and of the old country itself," Cook commented as they jogged along. "You feel it already, that sensation of everything having been ordained long ago, so that there is no use arguing against it or departing from it. It's all settled—what to wear and when to wear it—how to work—how to play, you don't need to trouble your head about it; things are *done* or they're not done; there you are! It's much more comfortable than our way; we seem to be eternally in a panic obeying some new convention, or boisterously defying it—"

"That's all very well, but you wouldn't live in

England," his wife interpolated. "And they say things are very much changed over there since the War, socially."

"Somehow I doubt that. A man might be a hero and a captain over hundreds, but it wouldn't make a gentleman of him, necessarily. Society doesn't alter its habits of thought so readily—English society, anyway. Even if valets get to be Lord High Admirals, they won't marry their princesses to them; the same things will be *done* or won't be done, though the heavens fall!"

"I wouldn't live anywhere but in my own country," Mrs. Gherardi said abruptly and with more emphasis, perhaps, than she knew. She was looking ahead where, between two opposing slants of cliff, the sea showed a spandrel of vivid blue; and her fellow-voyagers exchanged a rapid glance. They were both ready-witted enough and skilled in social devices, but for a second neither one, manifestly, could think of the right thing to say; and it was Edith herself who rescued the conversation with some commonplace about Bermuda's soil or rocks or scenery. "One can't call it a landscape; there isn't enough land," she added with a laugh.

It was the truth. At no turn or tangent of the road, up hill or down dale, could they escape the sea. It closed every vista, brimmed to every horizon. They came to miniature canons, where the road was entrenched through walls of coral limestone, airily hung from cornice to cornice with maidenhair fern; and at the far end, seen as down a tunnel or the barrel of a telescope, there was always the same flash of blue. Anon there would be hedgerows of tamarisk or oleander impossibly tall, flecked with pink and white bloom, blowing in the ceaseless light wind along the cliffs, the salt water at their very

roots, and beyond a great open field of sea whereon toy-like boats adventured gingerly. Once in a while the cavalcade trotted through a short lane of low white houses or past some villa with arbors of hibiscus immeasurably overgrown like the other changelings of the climate, or with high stucco walls and pergolas in the Italian taste artfully combined with plantings of a startling crimson bush—and to all this color the omnipresent ocean contributed its harmonizing touch of azure, running on a bit of beach, edging a stagey looking point of rocks. “Very pretty, that sea!” Celeste remarked somewhat acidly in her native idiom. “But at length I could pass myself of it. *C'est que nous en avons eu assez déjà!*”

They skirted for a while a good-sized lagoon, Harrington Sound, the driver called it, that ultimately narrowed at a little bridge under which the outgoing tide charged like a mill-race; a few more windings along the shore of a secondary sound—which seemed to be without a name and opened to the ocean between two capes a little farther on—brought them to the entrance of the hotel grounds; a signboard gave notice that afternoon tea was served there, picnic lunches put up and so on. “It does seem so queer not to see anything about motor-parties,” Mrs. Gherardi said, unable to accustom herself to this abnormal feature of life in Bermuda. Beyond was an irregular building or collection of buildings, put together at haphazard, with all kinds of porches and all kinds of roofs. It was of frame construction and painted white; its various units were visibly of different ages yet represented in no instance an architectural period of the least grace or character in design; but, having every chance in the world to be picturesque, the mongrel edifice, in spite of itself,

actually was picturesque! Its ungainly white bulk stood out with pleasing effect against the hillside background; the wooden verandahs overhung the water like balconies of romance; and parterres of nasturtiums and petunias enlivened the little esplanade before the door with the homely charm of those inn gardens still discoverable upon some old-world countryside. Within the St. Leon, however, its quaint attraction evaporated under what Mrs. Gherardi called the "Michigan influence," as manifested in varnished pine woodwork, sham-rustic decorations and a handsome supply of rocking-chairs. "Petoskey and Mackinac all over!" she murmured in an aside to Mrs. Cook. "And doesn't that pretty girl behind the desk remind you of the college-student waitresses you see at our little summer hotels? Next thing we'll be offered Indian grass-baskets and birchbark souvenirs—and we'll probably buy them, because one always does!"

Meanwhile, as Cook was making his entry in the hotel register, the pretty girl behind the desk bestowed on them all an appraising scrutiny which lingered longest on the French maid, and after her on Mrs. Gherardi, perhaps because they both appeared best qualified to stand it. Then she reached down the keys from her rack and tapped smartly with a pencil. "Front!" she proclaimed in accents of equal smartness. The classic summons was answered by a solemn little negro boy in a white jacket.

"Is your name 'Front'?" said Cook, eyeing the youngster with his whimsical soberness. Front grinned mutely, and the young girl clerk, catching Cook's eye, made a smiling explanation.

"I'm teaching him our ways so if he ever goes up to New York, he'll make a prize little bell-hop,"

she said in a not unpleasantly nasal voice. "Sometimes I forget and call him Sam, but he's pretty well trained now. He knows how to do."

"You're from the States?"

"Sure! There're lots of Americans here in business."

Upstairs in their quarters the Michigan influence was stronger still, if possible. Celeste looked with the silent and submissive disapproval of her kind on the box-like bedrooms with unpainted walls, the matting, the one electric-bulb dangling, shadeless, alongside the Mission bureau in precisely the most ineffectual position for lighting, then shrugged philosophically and set to work unpacking. Cook, entering later upon a scene bestrewn with his wife's evening toilettes trailing clouds of lace, with ranks of delicate slippers, layers of underwear, fragile Paris creations in hats and blouses amongst which the waiting-woman wrought grimly, retreated to their sitting-room in what he declared to be a cowed and panic-stricken state.

"There was scorn in her every movement. You should have heard the venomous irony of her: '*Monsieur will need his dinner-jacket?*' She knows full well it's about the last thing Monsieur is likely to need in this simple place. I suppose there never was a more complete and finished snob than a good servant. However, Celeste cannot escape. It's a long swim home, and the next boat doesn't sail for two weeks. Here we are and here we rest!" said he, cheerfully paraphrasing a well-known statement in Celeste's own tongue, and sat down and lit a cigarette. Little Mrs. Cook, looking more like a doll than ever in a chiffon negligee, its flowing lines caught here and there with garlands of satin rose-buds, with a similarly rosebudded trifle of a cap on

her head, and her feet in a pair of pink satin mules, was incongruously and most zestfully occupied with a slab of bread doubled with a slab of cheese.

"It doesn't seem to be exactly the place for evening clothes, to be sure," she observed, munching reflectively. "Yet I've never been in an English colonial possession—Toronto, Melbourne, Calcutta, anywhere—where they weren't great sticklers for the conventions."

"Maybe they are here in native circles. There must be a society of high-well-born Bermudans, Government officials, army people—all that sort, you know. There always is. It's very nice too, no doubt, but of course we shan't see anything of it, being mere tourists without any introductions. Everybody around the hotel, except the colored people, seems to have come from the States."

Mrs. Cook arched her eyebrows in mock surprise. "Already?" she ejaculated. "You always find out everything about everybody, Marshall, but not quite so soon. Who has been talking to you *now*?"

"Why, the proprietor, naturally enough. His name is Beales—Lester N. Beales. In summer he keeps the Grand Hotel up at Roscoe Lake, New York State; it's not far from Saratoga, he says, in the foot-hills of the Adirondacks. Winters he comes down here. You observe he has so ordered his life as not to have to suffer any extremes of climate. It sounds idyllic, but don't be misled. He tells me that he has a great deal of trouble with help in both places. Mrs. and Miss Beales—"

"Are they troublesome? Dear me, Marshall, you seem to have gotten further in confidences even than usual!"

Cook waved aside this frivolity. "Mrs. and Miss Beales," he repeated, "are with him. Wherever

he goes they go, like What's-the-name in the Bible. They are a very happy, united family, and they've been hotelling all their lives, the whole three. I don't know what Mrs. does but Miss keeps the books. You saw her."

"Oh, the girl downstairs? I shouldn't think they'd have much trouble with help now, at any rate, the place seems so quiet and deserted. Are we the only people here?"

"No. Some bridal couples. I gather that the main industry of Bermuda is entertaining bridal couples."

His wife's small features, ordinarily almost without expression, brightened with a humane interest that made her, for the moment, surprisingly attractive. "Brides and grooms? They're always so young and funny and dear! Bermuda seems very appropriate and Garden-of-Eden-ish for them; it's so isolated. But what do the rest of us do?"

"Dodge 'em," said Cook concisely. "So late in the season, there're probably won't be a great many. Why, we walk and drive mostly, as far as I can make out. There are caves; and you can go on water-excursions where they have boats with glass bottoms."

"Yes, we've all heard about the glass-bottomed boats. You look down and see the sea-growths—algae and things."

Cook tilted his chair back to look out of the window. It gave upon the inlet, across which there was a white stucco cottage with a flight of stone steps dropping to the water's edge, and a little landing where a boat bobbed. Tilting farther, he discovered landings on their own side and a curve of beach lined with corrugated iron huts between which garments of scanty and indecorous cut flapped on a line.

“‘*Thalassa!*’” he announced. “The sea! We can—”

“‘The sea?’” his wife echoed wonderingly. “Why, of course! You can’t get away from it!”

“What I was going on to say was that there are bath-houses and we can all go in swimming.”

“Oh, that’s very nice. Edith will be glad, she’s so fond of the outdoors and doing things.”

“She’s a restless creature.”

“What would you have? The War left everybody with that feeling.”

Cook lit another cigarette, blew a cloud of smoke and meditatively voiced the opinion that Edith Rudd was restless anyhow. “Nothing to do; no aim in life. Too much past and not enough future.”

“What would you have?” the lady repeated, shrugging.

As the afternoon advanced, a kind of soft chill sighed in from the ocean; the dark came on, not with the uncanny suddenness of the tropics, but decisively without twilight lingerings and uncertainties. The Cook couple started down to dinner which they had ascertained was spread at the rural hour of six o’clock. There was no time or room specified for the maids and other personnel of travellers of their grade, to Celeste’s displeased astonishment. But had one ever heard of a place so savage, so barbarous? It was that it was too strong! In fact, Mrs. Cook herself, for all her poise and worldly experience, was momentarily at a loss. “I really don’t know what to do,” she murmured to her husband. “She’s horrified at such an assumption of equality as eating in the same room with us! *Convenances*, you know. It would be funny if it were not so awkward. *I’m* willing to forget and forego class distinctions and all that sort of stuff, but *she* won’t.”

Mr. Cook sagely opined that Celeste would not carry her principles so far as to refuse to eat altogether. "The real trouble is that there is no society for her; no gentlemen's gentlemen or neat-handed Phyllises like herself. I am afraid she has not the soul of a pioneer."

"She has the soul of a well-mannered maid, and that suits me a great deal better," Bessie rejoined epigrammatically. "Only I don't quite know what to do—"

In the end they solved the problem by the Machiavellian expedient of letting it solve itself. It transpired that Celeste could sit at the steward's table which, the Cooks concluded, must be in the mediaeval phrase "below the salt" somewhere, perhaps behind a screen or in an alcove. The steward they found out, was a white man in distinction to the rest of the Beales' staff of unruly "help" who were all colored. This alarming social crisis had just been weathered through when Edith appeared heralded by Poilu with a tremendous scampering and sniffing and skittering of claws along the bare floors. Mrs. Gharardi had changed to a black costume which in spite of its grave and retiring hue caught the eye like its wearer—or it might be because of her—by a certain indefinable vivacity of aspect; it followed the style casually; and likewise her carrot-colored hair was brushed smoothly into a twist that achieved matchless modishness without being at all in the mode. Mrs. Cook, herself perfectly dressed and though at least ten years older, much the prettier woman, lost character utterly alongside her friend; she looked as if aware of this, but not therefore jealous; one might guess that she accepted the disadvantageous contrast as incidental to going about with Edith; a Venus would have

fared no better. "Mrs. Gherardi is the handsomest homely woman, or the homeliest handsome woman ever seen!" Cook was wont to declare, and their world agreed with him.

Miss Beales was not officiating behind the high, counter-like hotel desk as they passed by on the way to the dining-room. Instead a tall, long, wide, fair youth leaned against one of its inner angles supported on his elbows, his head and a pair of massive shoulders shrugged together over a book. He was too absorbed to look up even when the dog, possessed by the insatiable curiosity of all dogs, came whisking about his legs, only stretching down a hand to pat the creature, without moving his eyes from the page. "Hello, sport!" he said mechanically.

Edith halted to administer discipline. "Poilu! Come here, sir!"

Poilu bounced, wagging, in her direction; the blond young man looked up, at first vaguely as if some mist of fancy where other people moved in other scenes had risen from the book and hung between him and his actual prosaic surroundings. An instant and it cleared; he stared frankly with his blue eyes.

"I hope he didn't annoy you. He's generally a very good dog," said Mrs. Gherardi, at once easily and distantly; one staring young man or a dozen for that matter could not disturb an instinctive self-possession, adequate in any emergency, even if it had not been reinforced by years of relentless social drill. The other, on his side, was not nearly so well equipped; he crimsoned apoplectically in acute and quite causeless embarrassment, stuttering apologetic sounds. Edith stooped to snap the leash into the dog's collar. "I was told that I could have him in the dining-room, as long as I would guarantee his

good behavior," she said, glancing up questioningly.

The young man found his voice and assured her that it would be all right; and Mrs. Gherardi went on, enveloped in a kind of haze of dog. It was a long corridor and the young man continued in his staring attitude until the screen door at the other end admitted her. The dining room, which might have seated a hundred and fifty at its small round tables, was empty save for a youthful couple in one corner who left off whispering together to scan the newcomers briefly and without interest except in Poilu; but after a while another table equidistant between the entrance and the swinging pantry doors and convenient to both was taken by a company of two women and one man who, beginning at once to eat in a steady and business-like fashion and conversing amongst themselves with occasional subdued laughter, took no slightest notice of anybody else. "Beales family," Cook informed his wife in an undertone.

"The girl *is* pretty," said Mrs. Cook, looking without seeming to look, after the habit of women—or of her variety of woman, at any rate. "The others are a bride and groom, of course."

"Of course. I haven't got eyes in the back of my head, like you—I'm nothing but a man," said Cook with becoming humility. "But all the same I think I caught a glimpse of Celeste in the offing——"

"Oh, yes, she's over there," said Mrs. Gherardi tranquilly. "There's a man at the same table—it's the one that was on the trunk wagon this morning. The steward, did you say?"

"You too, Edith? I do wonder if they have found out as much about us as we have about them, in this little while. Knowledge is power!"

"However, the only knowledge hotel people are likely to be the least concerned about is that relating to their guests' solvency," Mr. Cook pointed out. "And respectability, of course," he added by what was so patently an afterthought that both the others smiled—indeed he himself smiled a second later. "Solvency first! Otherwise a tourist by the ocean's brim, a simple tourist is to them and nothing more!"

"Well, while we're at it, who is the viking behind the desk?"

But Cook was at fault for once; give him time and he would find out; it must be the regular hotel clerk, he thought, or perhaps the bar-keeper "spelling" Miss Beales. "Although the St. Leon doesn't seem to have any bar in the regulation style. Apparently you can drink all over the place, if you want to—and naturally nobody wants to."

"He doesn't look like a bar-keeper," Edith said. "Or what we imagine a bar-keeper to look like, anyhow."

Both ladies fixed an interrogative eye on Cook, who gave them back a look of prodigious mystery and inscrutability. "Oh, yes, I've seen and known them. In coming years when the race has vanished from the earth like the Aztecs, my authority will be invaluable. I suppose you figure them as pug-faced gentlemen with bung-starters which they are always bringing into action? But as a matter of fact the —er—the roughnecks are generally on the other side of the counter! The bar-keepers are mostly clean, spry, sober, temperate lads. Tolerably husky, of course. They have to be able to handle a customer suitably if he gives occasion for it."

"I thought the saloons always had what-d'ye-call-'ems, 'bouncers' hired just to do that."

"Well—er—yes. But in a high-class place men behave themselves, as a rule."

Mrs. Gherardi's bright, light-blue eyes moved over the little man as he sat across the table from her with a rather queer expression. It was not possible to believe that even in his young days of boyish spirits and scrapes, any saloon had ever required the services of a bouncer to rid its precincts of Mr. Marshall Cook. The conviction was irresistible that he must have been from the beginning the same good-humored, inoffensive, considerate person he was now, of most pedestrian wits, totally lacking the taste for adventure and by consequence without adventurous experience. Nevertheless, there was some feeling not far from envy in her voice as she said: "What chances men have!"

"And throw away?"

"No. You know what I mean. You couldn't write your novels if you weren't a man. You wouldn't have nearly the field, or the—the material—isn't that what you call it? You wouldn't have the freedom. It must be priceless in your art!"

"But women write novels. And the Lord knows," said Mr. Cook piously, "the Lord knows nothing could be freer than the novels they write!"

"You know what I mean," said Edith again. "Women have a stupid time. No real force in us, I suppose, except the force of endurance—and stones have that," she broke off. The Cooks had the air, fugitive and only to be noted perhaps by perceptions socially as practiced as their own, of taking pains not to look at each other or at their companion; and after a calculated interval, somebody brought up another topic.

The St. Leon had a lounge; that is, one of its many extensions was built out on piles above the

water with walls of windows after the manner of a sun-room and the rest of the interior ceiled with narrow boards between the structural timbers. There was a mammoth stone fireplace where, in view of the character of the building it would have been little short of arson to light a fire, a billiard table indifferently kept, a heart-broken piano, and a Victrola in splendid fighting trim furnished with a stack of dance records almost as high as the little colored bellboy; he appeared after dinner ready to serve the instrument with the same gravity of demeanour he had brought to his earlier duties. The bride and groom engaged him for a dance or two; but there was a beautiful moon over Harrington Sound, which accounted for and justified their present departure. The Beales, father, mother and daughter, evaporated somewhere, too; only the blond young man remained at his post, steadfast as Casabianca, still engrossed in the book. Cook, according to his own report, had taken a surreptitious squint at the title. "And it's not one of *my* books," he said in accents of exaggerated melancholy. "It's Shaw or some struggling, obscure author of his class."

"They have yours here, though, Marshall—two of them, anyhow. I saw them in the penny-a-day library in the lobby," said his wife. She named them. "*Venetian Nights* and *The Aftermath*."

"No matter. Siegfried or Olav Trygvason or whatever his name is isn't reading them," ejaculated the little man with a great parade of disgust. "I don't give much for his literary taste."

"Well, I was just going to say, isn't it rather strange for a bar-keeper to be reading Shaw?"

"He has to do *something*," suggested Mrs. Gherardi. "It looks as if there would be unlimited time for reading in Bermuda."

They agreed with suppressed yawns that it did look that way, sure enough; Cook smoked innumerable cigarettes; the ladies played a game of bagatelle with an ancient board they discovered in a corner; then they all simultaneously recollected the privileges of the island, and called for and drank a couple of pints of ale; and at half past nine o'clock the party unanimously went to bed!

CHAPTER III

DURING the next few days Mr. Cook remarked more than once upon the simple and unassuming friendliness with which the Hotel St. Leon dispensed its hospitalities. It was a quality sufficiently rare in hotels, and found a complement in that other quality sufficiently rare in travellers which these possessed, a pleasant readiness to accept any and all conditions of travel and make the best of them. Indisputably, of all people to get along with, a well-bred wordling is the easiest, and good manners will help us to withstand the wear and tear of everyday association better than good morals. The Cooks and Mrs. Gherardi would have considered it a descent into the uttermost depths of snobbery to find fault with their fare or quarters; but even Celeste, that lady of difficult standards, relaxed somewhat from her *de-haut-en-bas* attitude, in a measured approval. Indeed, the little place was clean and comfortable, and not without its own rural dignity; and its very intimacy commended it.

Time went by in a leisurely style befitting the environment. Mrs. Cook's recovery progressed accompanied by a good deal of joking to which she retorted with both amiability and sprightliness; seasickness is not a malady ever taken very seriously even by the sufferer. They went on a number of the Bermudan excursions, two or three drives to Hamilton, to St. George, along the white roads with the incessant breeze rustling among the tamarisks, past

the tiny farm plots where the crops of onions and potatoes and the famous tall white lilies of the island had just been harvested. There was something incongruous about the saintliness of the last, and the sterling and substantial character of the first of these staple products in this dream land at the door-sill of the profligate tropics; but here were the flowers pure and glistening suggesting Easter morning chancels, and here were the other stout vegetables thriving dependably, bringing in an income, as steady members of the family as any to be found in the unromantic truck patches of Indiana or Michigan. Banana plantations neighbored them, in the hot little hollows of bottom-land, their high, fantastic growth hinting the jungle; but there was no jungle. One might recognize the friendly weeds of home flourishing amongst the lantanas and maidenhair and pine scrub; quail piped afar in the pastures; there were decent pigs and hens instead of the wild, brilliant, busy animal population only a few degrees farther south; and according to local report, Bermuda was as free from reptiles as another green island of less tranquil atmosphere.

In short, it was somewhat unexpectedly civilized and most thoroughly Englished. Of the sixteenth-century Spanish semi-pirate and freebooter who discovered it, of his fellow countrymen who from time to time occupied or claimed it for a hundred years thereafter, not a legend remained, not a tombstone, not a named place, except one narrow, twisting alley in the old town of St. George which they called Spanish Street. It was marked by a house with a balcony of wrought-iron work painted apple-green—or aged and weathered to that color—at one of its upper windows, an architectural feature not to be encountered elsewhere in Bermuda, which appeared to

authenticate its origin; it was not English, *ergo*, it must be Spanish. But even the native—Mr. Overbridge, in fact—who showed it to the visitors was not much interested in it either as a piece of antiquity or because of its alien tradition; he perhaps held the insular, Johnsonian opinion that all foreigners are fools. “Those old Spaniards,” he said vaguely. “Yes, they were here for a while. They didn’t stay. Now, *my* family came over in sixteen-sixty. We’ve been here always.”

This was on the day when they drove over to call, pursuant to agreement. The little, antique town lay all aslant on the slopes of the headlands that fended off the sea from St. George’s harbor; at the highest point a recently-built hotel doubtless accurately up-to-date with twelve hundred rooms and twelve hundred baths, Cook surmised, was blocked against the sky, its windows boarded up forbiddingly. Farther along was the pious silhouette of a church. The Government dockyards framed one whole side of the bay which itself was a very hospital for disabled ships put in for repairs or supplies.

“They say Bermuda was a famous roosting-place for pirates in the good old days, like the West Indies and the Caribbean generally,” said Cook. “I’ve read about ‘em in Esquemeling’s *Voyages*—Sir Henry Morgan, Lolonnois, Bat the Portugee—” He lingered on the names with frank relish; and then added in a musing tone as his eyes roamed over the black hulks and funnels and tall six-masted freighters: “I’ve a notion that piracy is still practiced hereabouts—but with a difference. The boot is on the other foot; it’s the dashing sea-rovers that get the worst of it nowadays! My name was Captain Kidd, as I sailed, as I sailed. And they stung me, so they did! As I sailed!”

It was probably with this idea still uppermost in his mind that he later addressed a few innocent-sounding questions to the ship-chandler, who answered at large, unsuspicious. "Well, they get in trouble with the machinery, or the cargo shifts, or they run out of coal or oil or water," he said. "Eh? Sure! I can furnish pretty near anything a ship would need. Hey? Oh, yes, I sell 'em water. Six dollars a ton—do your own hauling, of course."

"It's odd to think of water as merchandize. You have wells of your own or—er—water-rights of some sort?" Cook hazarded.

Mr. Overbridge smiled. "Why, sir, there isn't a well, there isn't a stream, there isn't a drop of fresh water springing naturally as you might say on the island of Bermuda or any of the other islands. People have tried to dig wells, but the water's always brackish; it can't be drunk. The average rainfall is sixty inches a year, and that's all we get." As Cook ejaculated in astonishment, he nodded, affirming again: "All we get! We gather it up and store it in cisterns. I'm building one now with twelve thousand square feet of rainshed up on the hill back of town here." Mr. Overbridge gestured indefinitely, smiling anew at his guests' faces of wonderment and half-belief. One might infer from his expression that the effect of this information on stray travellers afforded perennial and never-failing recreation to Bermudans.

"No water?" Cook ejaculated again, fixing his eye-glasses mechanically. "One can't understand why anybody ever settled here under such conditions." He thought a moment. "Do you suppose that is the reason Bermudez and the rest of the Spaniards didn't stay? They are a temperate race."

"It wouldn't worry an Englishman so much,

hey?" retorted Overbridge, good-naturedly enough. "Maybe. Anyhow we've got along fairly well with the cisterns for a couple of centuries. Once in a while run short, of course, in a dry season and have to be careful. We're a little short just now," he finished casually, and directed a knowing squint at the radiant sky, wagging his head with a kind of genial concern.

Mrs. Cook exclaimed in birdlike excitement. "Mercy on us, let's all take our baths in the ocean! Down on the beach, you know. That ought to save several gallons—"

"Not several, *one*—or even only a quart in your case," said Edith; and the others, surveying the lady's charming small figure, had to laugh. It was not easy to imagine Mrs. Cook on short rations of cleanliness; the mind refused to picture her lax, soiled, unkempt. Her taste in dress was characterized by a dainty over-elaboration; she emphasized the feminine note persistently with blouses, jabots, frills and flounces, with intricacies of lace and needlework daily of a new-laundered freshness. Mrs. Gherardi's style was as finished, but it seemed as if she might have carried off the trappings of an Indian squaw or some old-time backwoods belle, gaudy and not too fastidious, with no loss of personal effect. The distant possibility of being obliged to rough it without a profuse supply of hot water, and limited as to changes of underwear, manifestly wore for her only the aspect of a novel and entertaining adventure. She asked some highly practical questions.

"It's strange I didn't hear about this scarcity of water before," she commented as their victoria jogged homeward. "I've been all over the island and talked to ever so many people. You'd argue

from their not mentioning it that it's really very seldom they're inconvenienced. Five feet of rain a year is a good deal after all. Anyhow it wouldn't be very good business for them to talk to strangers about it, I suppose."

Cook glanced into her keen face with the reflection that there spoke the daughter of a race of money-making fathers, shrewd men of affairs. Tourists, of course, furnished the main industry of Bermuda; and had Mrs. Gherardi been a native islander in small circumstances, instead of a wealthy, idle, roving American woman, it was conceivable that she would have exploited the tourists to good purpose. She was "that sort," Cook said to himself. It was quite true that she had already been all over the island. One of the first things she did was to go exploring out and hire a bicycle, and by this time her spare, smart figure in the trimmest of sporting clothes, high-skirted, nattily gaitered, finished off with hats, gauntlets and other accessories always appropriate and becoming though apparently selected at random, must have grown familiar to Bermudan eyes, wheeling along the highroads with Poilu quartering the landscape to right and left, ahead, behind. The exercise never flushed, never winded her, never disordered her hair or toilette; and the liberal coating of tan and freckles thus acquired she contrived to wear with the indifferent consciousness of suitability that gave her homeliness its paradoxical charm. She was the object of much puzzled and, to tell the truth, rather grudging admiration on the part of Miss Miriam Beales, who from behind the office desk frequently gave her directions as to roads and distances and how to reach the "points of interest." A pretty woman finds it hard to forgive such unwarrantable success in looks;

it is not in nature for ugliness to steal a march on beauty; there must be some chicanery about it, she argues subconsciously.

"I don't know what there is about her. She's just got a kind of style of her own," the girl would declare, her eyes following Mrs. Gherardi with a look half envious, half merely baffled. "Mom says anybody could have a style with all the money *she* must spend, and I shouldn't wonder if that was so—still— The other day she had on the loveliest cream color tricolette with embroidery in those queer pale shades of henna and orange or something that nearly matched her hair, and gold threads run all through it. And then she had on a cream turban with a perfectly luscious cluster of henna ostrich curling all around and down behind one ear onto her shoulder—"

"Yum-yum! I'll say its sounds luscious anyway," interposed the gentleman to whom these remarks were addressed, flippantly. "Only how'd you know it was a hen ostrich? Don't the roosters have any feathers?"

Miss Beales informed him that he was terribly bright, and he retorted that he couldn't help it, he was made that way; they kept up the vivacious sparring for some moments—until in fact, Mr. Cook loitered in, whereupon both assumed a business-like decorum. Miss Beales pondered over the hotel ledger; the young man—he was the lean and sallow young man of the Hamilton quay and baggage wagon—lounged within the breastwork of cigar boxes at the other end of the enclosure. Cook went up and asked for a package of cigarettes. "Zuleikas, if you please, Mr. Tarvey," said he and lingered to light one.

The occasion seemed to call for something further

in the way of urbanities, so Tarvey said: "Getting used to Bermuda?"

"Well, the floor in the corridor dropped about three feet and rose up again this morning as I was walking along it," said the little man. "Otherwise I should have begun to believe myself actually on dry land."

"The floor? *Oh!* I didn't get you right off," said Tarvey. "You said it so kinda serious," and he grinned. "Yeah, you're on land all right. It'll stop that wobbling directly. Must have been one fierce trip you had coming down."

"Yes. I felt worse than going all the way to Europe."

"Me too! It's the Gulf Stream."

"Ah, were you over there?"

"Where, you mean? Oh, in the War? Yeah, sure! I went," Tarvey said indifferently. "Didn't you say you wanted a rig to go to Hamilton Sunday morning, Mr. Cook? Four seats? All right!" He reached for the telephone.

Cook drifted off to establish himself on the porch, in a tilted chair with his feet on the rail; it was possible to pass many pleasant semi-somnolent hours thus, lapped in the softly cool Bermudan airs, the tide whispering below. Sometimes a big steamer came into view across the mouth of the inlet, standing out to sea for New York, Halifax, Boulogne; sometimes a catboat—or the variety of craft known by that name to mid-western rivers and the Lakes, whatever it was called in Bermuda—would swim boldly up past the hotel verandahs to the kitchen landing, where Mrs. Beales might presently be seen bargaining for fish, or it would be Mr. Beales, or mayhap Tarvey; sometimes an island carry-all crossed the Harrington Sound bridge with much hol-

low rumbling and set down a party of visitors from some other sparsely populated hotel for tea—a euphemism for beer and sandwiches. But these excitements were rare; the season was virtually over; and in this part of the island, at least, none of the picturesque activities of a sea-dwelling people seemed to be going forward. There were no dories, no strings of lobster-pots, no brown nets spread to dry, or old, weather-stained, romantic canvas getting patched and old boats rebottomed. If the novelist was in search of local color—and where'er he wanders that is what a novelist is universally supposed to be after!—he must have been more or less disappointed; but he appeared quite content to loaf on the porches, smoking interminably, passing the time of day with whomsoever came along, outwardly and to the casual view the least interested and the least interesting man of letters in existence. Nevertheless, young Tarvey, when he had put in the order for the rig to go to Hamilton Sunday morning, and clapped up the instrument, idly studied Mr. Cook's back in the hickory chair for an instant, and said: "Nice little fellow!"

"We-ell," said Miss Beales hesitantly, in the manner of one who suspends judgment.

"I mean sort of easy and natural, you know. You wouldn't ever think he was an author."

"Maybe he isn't much of a one," Miriam suggested.

"Oh yes—way up top," Tarvey assured her with emphasis, but he qualified the statement in the next breath. "Well, I'm only going by what Cleve says. Cleve says he's right at the top." The girl made a sound capable of almost any interpretation, and he went on understandingly, as if in answer: "Oh, of course Cleve's got pretty highbrow ideas, still *some*

of the stuff he likes is good. Anyhow Mr. Cook's all right—and Gee!" said Mr. Tarvey in simulated admiration; "hasn't he got the nerve trailing round with all that outfit of ladies? Tell *you*, Brigham Young wouldn't have had anything on *him*!"

"That French girl that sits at your table, she's just *with* 'em, isn't she? She's Mrs. Cook's ladies' maid."

"Yeah, I guess so. French women are all alike, though," Tarvey said, executing a shrug that was sufficiently Gallic. "I can't see any of 'em. Me for the U. S. A. girls!" he announced with a kind of shyly swaggering significance—of which, it may be added, Miss Beales took no notice!

In the meanwhile Mrs. Gherardi pedalled away, and ere long pedalled back again, not to rest, but to seek some new outlet for her insatiable energy. No fancy-work, no dreaming on the front porch, no afternoon naps for her! This time she had been to see Tom Moore's house, having discovered with numberless previous visitors to Bermuda that that Irish gentleman with his talent for jingling lyrics and his amiable personality had once occupied some official position under the British Government in the island, though what had been his duties or indeed what duties Thomas was fit for, it would be hard to guess. There, however, was the little coral limestone house in a green glade down by the sea where he had sojourned briefly during the year 1802, and there was the gangling skeleton of the very calabash tree under which and about which he had jingled. The verses were displayed on a species of sign-board alongside it, and Edith Gherardi read them with unappreciative mirth. A deal of water has gone under the bridges since 1802, and it may well have washed away the honest poet's name and fame

along with it; more than probably Mrs. Edith's generation has never heard of Tom Moore. So departs the glory of this world—as he himself would have said, in the original Latin, of course; and turned a couplet of artificial melancholy, artificial cynicism.

Mrs. Gherardi returned then, smiling to herself over Moore's calabash tree; and noting that it was about half-tide and that the sound looked warm, bright-blue, and sparkling and inviting, decided that she would kill some of the remaining time this afternoon by going in for a swim. None of them had essayed the St. Leon bathing-beach as yet; but as she lay drowsing in the cool early dawn, she would often hear a profound splash like the deepest bass note on a piano struck sonorously, and once or twice there had been voices calling and talking and laughter subdued yet carrying to the ear with the peculiar distinctness of sound that travels over water. The first time that this happened, Edith who was a light sleeper came broad awake with a jump, but with all her faculties at immediate command by grace of some quality of both her physical and mental make-up; she listened a second, satisfied herself that it was no fag-end of a dream, got out of bed and went to the window. There were two heads of men bobbing about on the current; anon their shoulders and sleekly shining black bathing-trunks came into view. They were dexterous and able swimmers both, and they gambolled like a pair of dolphins, played leapfrog, and indulged in rough water-jokes on each other. Edith was interested and watched for a while—until indeed one of them, chancing to look up, must have seen her; he spoke to his companion and to her amusement they scrambled for the shore farther along out of her range in a panic. She reported the incident to the Cooks with com-

ment on Bermudan modesty. "It must be that society here does not countenance mixed bathing—just like some of the continental resorts, you know. I haven't spied on them since, for fear of embarrassing them again." But later on some of the afternoon tea-ers went in together, men and women, in open and jolly companionship, proving that Bermuda was as sophisticated in this respect as any American beach from Coney Island to Coronado.

This day when Mrs. Gherardi came down, the shore was tenantless, although as she picked out one of the little dressing-booths, she was aware of somebody moving about and whistling in an undertone, a mere sibilant intake of breath, two or three doors away; and presently when she emerged, a lank Diana in black silk jersey with her tawny mane of hair gathered up compactly in a turban of green and blue and cream stripes, she was again aware by one of those feminine intuitions of which no one would have suspected her that some spectator lurked in the background. Mrs. Gherardi did not immediately begin to pose for the benefit of an audience, did not even turn her head; she was "not that sort" to quote Mr. Cook once more. She slipped easily into the water that was lipping the edge of the platform and struck out; it was colder than she had expected and the tide tugged at her. She swam in a lengthening arc, turning at the end towards the shore and the hotel which all at once seemed surprisingly far away. Her lately invisible audience had come out into the open; there was only one of him, and he sat on the bottom-step of one of the landing-stages, with his legs in the water, dressed or undressed for the sport but to all appearances

temporizing, not yet ready. Edith could not distinguish his features, but his head was turned, watching her or looking in her direction and—

And it was at this moment that Mrs. Gherardi began to feel that something was wrong. The water plucked her around the body with sudden overmastering strength; she was tired, her stroke was without force. "*Here, this won't do!*" she admonished herself inwardly, and rolled over on her back, paddling, trying to float and rest. After a minute, five minutes, she could not tell how long, she turned over again, and realized with an icy stab of fear that she was not rested, her limbs were leaden, the shore was farther away than before, much too far—she barely saw the other bather with his arms above his head, poising for a dive.

Mrs. Gherardi's endowment of pride, courage and resourcefulness was ample even for this ugly predicament; perhaps she might have won out of it, unaided. But that pride, courage and resourcefulness are based finally upon solid common-sense was never better demonstrated than by her next act. The diver took the water smoothly, and came up, raising himself with a valiant motion; he was already heading towards her when Edith called out. He came swiftly on, pushing through with an even and powerful stroke.

"I won't catch hold of you," said Edith faintly but firmly. "Just let me . . . hand on your shoulder . . ."

He reached her before the words were fairly uttered, either perceiving that she still had her wits about her, or careless of the danger if she had not, and obeyed without answering, ranging alongside. For all her presence of mind, Edith all but lost con-

trol of the chilled fingers that gripped at his shoulder, but she kept her word by a stark effort of will; and in a moment the feeling of the big muscles moving with unimpeded rhythm fortified her. Looking back upon the rescue later, it seemed to her that a ridiculously narrow space, not more than a few yards, had separated her from safety; half a minute, twenty strokes, and her dragging feet touched bottom! It was vexatious and absurd; nevertheless she was still conscious of a mortal fatigue. "I'm all right now," she managed to whisper.

"Better hold on till we get to where it's not quite so deep, hadn't you? We could wade but it's up to your neck," the modern Saint Christopher advised. And in fact Mrs. Gherardi found herself well satisfied to hold on until they got to where it was not so deep; his help as they climbed to the staging was very welcome.

"Want some brandy?" she heard him ask from an immeasurable distance, somewhere on the rim of the revolving landscape; she shook her head feebly; all she wanted was to keep on lying still in the warm sun. The planks beneath her were water-soaked, gritty with sand, slimy with sea-growth, but there was a singular comfort in their stability; she stared in vague wonder at her hands which had a curious blue, shrivelled look. She scarcely knew that the other had left her, dashing off up the beach, until he came back with a vast, rough, enveloping garment, a bath-robe or perhaps a blanket which he draped upon her awkwardly, tent-wise; and with a tumbler of something that he held to her lips. Edith roused herself to drink, and lo, living fire threaded every vein! She choked on the stuff, coughed, swallowed again determinedly, and in a second or

two was able to look at him with something like a smile; another second and she recovered enough voice to thank him briefly, like a man.

"Oh, that's all right," he said, also without effusion. Mrs. Gherardi made herself snug in the wrap; and being a practical person and thrifty withal, abhorring waste, finished off the drink to the last drop.

"I believe it was cramp. I never had anything of the kind before," she said. "It was lucky for me you were here."

He nodded gravely. "The tide was running out very strong today. It varies, I don't know why. The way the wind blows may have something to do with it. I've seen people get in trouble out there before—" His gesture indicated the mid-channel which, however, was now very slack and peaceable. Edith, examining him as he sat in profile to her, recognized the Siegfried of the hotel desk. Attired for the water he loomed up bigger than ever, all muscular arms and legs and chest frowzed with hair like Sampson, and burned a fine red; the limits of his cheap bathing-vest and breeches must be defined on him as with a stencil.

"Isn't the morning your regular time for going in?" she asked. "You and somebody else? That other man—?"

Siegfried glanced at her and away quickly, suffering an accession of color perceptible even through all his sunburn; and this phenomenon puzzled Mrs. Gherardi the more because he was plainly not troubled by false shame or any sort of prudish scruples, taking his own semi-nudity and hers as a matter of course, precisely as she herself took it. She decided that the ready blush was a mere boyish

habit, not yet outgrown; he could not be over twenty-five years old. He was speaking.

"The other man's Tarvey. You've seen him around here. He's the cook. Yes, we go in together almost every morning."

Mrs. Gherardi sat unexpectedly struck dumb; it is safe to say that never throughout her whole career had she been discomfited to such a degree—and her career had not lacked crises that would have defeated many another woman. It was not exactly the revelation of Tarvey's status; the difference socially, if any exists, between a cook and a steward was negligible from her standpoint. But if Tarvey was the cook, who and what was his boon companion of the swimming-hole? Not that his position was a matter of any consequence either, Edith hastily assured herself; only the poor young fellow seemed to be deliberately hinting to her, warning her. He had just saved her from drowning—or very nearly—and he wanted her to know that it was a friend and associate of the cook's who had done it—as if that could possibly affect her attitude towards him! For once in her life, as has been said, Mrs. Gherardi was at a standstill; she did not know whether to be angry with him or sorry for him—and worst of all at the moment, she did not know what to say. He saved her further embarrassment—whether by intention or not—by announcing casually that if she felt all right now, he believed he would go on in and finish his swim. "Would you like to try it again? The tide's almost out—?" In fact, the beach in front of their perch was now a bare, wet slope ridged with waves of sand, and he dropped down to it, and turned facing her inquiringly.

"Not this afternoon! I've had all I care about

for one time!" said Edith so fervently that he laughed. She sat some little time muffled in his bath-robe—it was Siegfried's own bath-robe, the cook's friend's bath-robe, without a doubt—watching him as he first waded, then swam out to deep water.

CHAPTER IV

Mrs. Gherardi said nothing to her friends about the all-but-tragic episode of that afternoon. To avert her mind from it, to try to forget it, was only natural; but Edith, whose gifts included a certain capacity, always ruthlessly exercised, for judging and assigning correctly the motives behind her own conduct, knew very well that she was not afraid to think about her escape, and knew too that it was not consideration for the Cooks that withheld her from talking about it. Her stumbling-block was Siegfried; that was the flat truth. A causeless reticence about him possessed her; she would not even find out his name, either by direct questioning, or the roundabout devices of women—which last, indeed, were foreign enough to her character. No, Mrs. Edith, arrayed in a succession of distinguished costumes drove and walked and rode the bicycle as before, and even went in bathing again, safely and brilliantly, preserving her great-lady air of courteous indifference to popular taste and popular opinion; and if she was all the while conscious of a poignant curiosity centered on the office-desk of the Hotel St. Leon, nobody would have guessed it; she would only admit it to herself with a sneer.

She had taken no heed heretofore, but now noted that his hours on duty varied, probably to suit Miss Beales's convenience; and what he did between whiles varied likewise, as well as Edith could judge,

from clacking away on a typewriter in the little room opening off of the corridor—printing the day's menus? They were typewritten on a card with the hotel letter-head embossed floridly at the top and dates and corrections scrawled with red ink—to going errands to Hamilton on a bicycle, and for a final display of versatility, playing pool with Mr. Cook. She happened upon them in the lounge one day, coats off, in an atmosphere foggy with cigarettes, earnestly engaged at the down-at-the-heel old table and chalking up the score on the door with a due observance of the rigor of the game. Siegfried saw her and blushed crimson and fumbled his shot; and Mrs. Gherardi actually retreated in sudden trepidation, annoyance, embarrassment, or a mixture of all three. Cook's back was towards her, and he did not turn around; perhaps he neither saw nor heard her—perhaps. On the surface he was absorbed in pool, exhibiting signs of intense satisfaction when the balls went blundering idly about the table. "Ah-ha, a muff!" says Mr. Cook gleefully; and clamped the cigarette in the corner of his mouth, chalked his cue and carefully prepared a stroke, oblivious of Edith's entrance and abrupt departure, oblivious of his opponent's seizure of self-consciousness, oblivious of everything, in fine, that ought normally and naturally to attract attention. Mrs. Gherardi, who herself was well schooled in the art of seeing and ignoring with discrimination, distrusted the little man. That mild, neat, harmless exterior with the professorial beard and eye-glasses, masked who knows what sharp and merciless powers of observation. He would make copy out of any incident, and no one, friend, enemy, good, bad or indifferent was safe from him, she thought, adding with a sane and humorous tolerance, why should they be? It was his

trade; he was a writer and all was grist that came to his mill.

Even after this, she still refrained from inquiry about Siegfried; and Cook on his side did not volunteer information—another suspicious circumstance. But there came a day when the eminent author must have made up his mind that—to employ an appropriate figure—it was time to end this particular chapter and begin a new one; or perhaps he was only experimenting to see what would follow; or again perhaps he acted, and had acted throughout in simplicity—though Edith would have her doubts of him still. It was when they had all come in from a drive, warm and tired, with eyes dazzled by the white glare of the roads, and Mrs. Cook suggested something to drink. “You can have your ale, Marshall. I want a lemonade fixed with fizz-water, don’t you, Edith? Where’s Sam?”

But the little darky lad was not within call, it seemed; Cook left the ladies on the porch and went inside and came back. “I’ve ordered. It’ll be here in a minute,” said he, with a rather queer countenance, and went to work letting down the legs of a folding table.

“What are you doing that for? Let Sam when he comes. He likes to, and I daresay it gives him the feeling of having earned his tip,” said Mrs. Marshall.

Her husband made some irrelevant rejoinder—and upon the heels of it, out came Siegfried with the tray, bottles, siphon, all the rest of it, and silently ranged them on the table and laid the bar-check before Mr. Cook to sign, while he himself applied the corkscrew. He lacked only a white jacket and apron. Edith Gherardi felt violently that

she had never been through so abominable a moment. And then Cook spoke.

"Won't you sit down, Mr. Harrod, and help me out with this?" said the little author, motioning towards the ale. He hit precisely the right note, genial and spontaneous; it was a masterpiece.

"No, thank you, Mr. Cook. The management, you know—?" said the other equably; no changing color now, no plunging into a state of benumbed bashfulness; he even smiled, finishing the unspoken hint about the proprieties hotel-servants must observe.

There was a little silence after he went, and then Bessie Cook said: "Is his name Harrod? I believe that's the first time I've heard it."

"Yes, Cleveland Harrod. I asked him: 'Not *Grover* Cleveland, by any chance?' and he got fiery red and then laughed and confessed that it was Grover sure enough! He was named for the late President, of course—Harrod senior was undoubtedly a stout Democrat and celebrated the arrival of Harrod junior and the triumph of his own political principles at one stroke. But the young fellow doesn't like the Grover half of it, and never uses it or lets it be known if he can help it, he tells me. He says it's 'hicky' to be called after a public man. One can understand the point of view," Mr. Cook concluded and took a pull at his ale, having delivered all of the above speech in a style of amused detachment, and without once looking at Mrs. Gherardi.

The latter emulated him successfully as she said: "You seem to have got quite thick. Weren't you playing pool with him the other day?"

"Oh, that's nothing!" Mrs. Cook interposed. "Marshall would have been chumming with Satan

by this time and calling him by his first name! Just to pick up a little inside information, you know; something about that spicy little affair in the Garden of Eden, for instance. I told you he always got to knowing everybody." She challenged him. "Mr. Tarvey's a friend of yours too, isn't he? You've met in the intervals when he's not slicing vegetables or making soup or something?"

She was laughing, though not unkindly, and Cook himself was quite matter-of-course in his answer. "Yes, I know Tarvey. I know a freight conductor on the City of Mexico and Orizaba run; I know other conductors and train crews elsewhere; I know a pawnbroker in the Rue Peridot, Marseilles; I know an old retired jockey down in Georgetown, Kentucky; I know bankers and janitors and deans of universities and policemen and baseball magnates and baseball players and dressmakers and real countesses and bogus countesses and barbers and farm hands and real estate men and hoboes and walking delegates——"

"You see now why I steadily refuse to chaperon any young ladies when we go off on one of these trips," said Bessie, looking to her friend in a whimsical appeal for sympathy. "I can't risk their meeting the weird collection of people Marshall picks up. All very well for *him*; and I don't mind hobnobbing with them myself—only they never care to hob-nob with *me!* But what would the girls' mammas say? Sometimes the men are young like our friends Mr. Tarvey and Mr.—what's the name? Mr. Harrod? Even supposing they are gentlemen, of sorts——?" She broke off on a questioning inflection, raising her eyebrows towards her husband.

"As you say," he retorted drily. "Even supposing them to be gentlemen—of sorts——?"

Something in his expression moved her to make a mouth at him, then to laugh and shrug. "Oh, I understand! A man's trade has nothing to do with the man himself—unless one is snobbish enough to think so. Theoretically that is all right and very fine and so forth, and I subscribe to it heartily. But in practice—a cook's a cook for a' that! I still shouldn't want to take the responsibility of introducing any girl I had under my wing to a circle of chefs."

"American society is the one perfect democracy," said Cook pleasantly, swirling the ale around and around in the bottom of his mug.

"Oh, be as ironic as you choose, you know your Tarveys and your Harrods may not be exactly impossible, but they're highly improbable," his wife returned in a spirited epigram.

"Is Mr.—er—Tarvey the cook here?" asked Edith innocently.

"So Celeste says. And besides I ran into him the other day looking as cookyfied as could be with one of those square paper caps they wear, and a greasy old bed-ticking apron tied around the middle of him. For a second I didn't recognize him, and then when I did, I was terribly stuck for something to say. I don't know now what I ought to have said. What would you have said in my place, Marshall?"

"Why, I would have said in my own place: 'Hello! How's everything?' or words to that effect," Cook said. "I really couldn't recommend anything in that style for you, though. It seems rather too breezy, somehow."

"I just stuttered around. It was ghastly."

"And what does the other one do?" pursued Edith, not without a spasm of inward wonder at

herself, for this exercise of cheap and feeble cunning. "Is he another cook?"

"Why, I don't know—" said Mrs. Cook, hesitating; "he seems to be a little of everything. He's just around to make himself useful in any way that comes up, isn't that it, Marshall?"

"About," he assented. "I have an idea that Mr. Harrod doesn't know how to do anything, really—I mean he hasn't had any training for any specific calling. Otherwise he wouldn't be here in this nondescript position. I've made a bet with myself that whatever job Grover Cleveland held three or four years ago he lost it when he went into the army—of course he went in at the beginning, all of his kind of young men did—and when he came out, he couldn't get it back again. I've made a bet that that's his history—with some few details besides—and I've made another bet that I'll find out before we've been here a week."

"That accounts for the pool-games and the other affabiliities. Oh, Marshall!"

"Don't you think you're a little cold-blooded?" said Edith—to her instant regret. But Cook took the criticism in good part; and if it betrayed an undue concern for young Harrod, the author's manner suggested no suspicion of it.

"Oh, but I am interested," he protested warmly. "It's not axe-grinding with me. I want to know about everybody because everybody is interesting."

The little man of letters, whose speech so often gave the impression of balancing airily between fun and earnest, pressed his point with what looked like genuine feeling; he made energetic gestures, settling his eye-glasses. "Come, be charitable! Other people collect books or lace or antique furniture. I collect something infinitely more variable

and strange and entertaining, men's lives, men's minds, men's hearts—or as much of them as I can get a peep into. What's wrong, or as you say, cold-blooded about that? It doesn't harm them. They don't even know it. It's only another kind of collecting."

"It's too much like sticking pins through beetles and putting them under a microscope," Mrs. Gherardi objected. "You may talk. I think there's a fallacy somewhere, but I'm not clever enough to spot it and silence you. Men's hearts and all that don't seem somehow to be proper subjects for collecting. But you may talk!" The argument wound up in laughter.

Thanks to Cook's diplomacy as shown in the porch incident—if it was diplomacy and not mere kindness—it now all at once became possible for Mrs. Edith Gherardi and Mr. Cleveland Harrod to meet and greet without a vestige of the odd embarrassment that had hitherto hampered them—or hampered *him*, at any rate. Whatever the gentleman thought, the lady was cynically surprised. Who would have believed the thing so simple? Yesterday they were shunning yet covertly seeking each other, self-conscious and awkward as a pair of high-school youngsters, or any country Jack and Jill. Today who so openly friendly, assured and at ease? What had been the matter with them? Edith, who had seen the world, as the phrase goes, knew what was the matter with the young man; he touched even while he amused her, stirring whatever of wistful maternalism lurked at the bottom of her bored and disillusioned heart. As to her own case she was as capable of a diagnosis as Mr. Cook whose gift that way she somewhat feared—not without reason. Harrod intrigued her with his heroic good looks, the petty

mystery of his position, his boyish surrender to love at first sight; the foolish business intrigued her and —yes, flattered her. She was a woman, therefore to be wooed; what woman on earth ever seriously objected to that? Edith could look at her own thin, irregular, spirited face in the glass and laugh; here she was, thirty and never-mind-what, no beauty in her best days, with a past of embittering experiences from which she had not yet recovered, if she ever would; and this romantic youth had to go and fall in love with her! The little Beales girl down in the office by his side was ten years younger and much more than ten times prettier. The trouble was that she *was* by his side, Mrs. Gherardi opined shrewdly with another laugh; she herself came surrounded by the glamour of another world wherein, no doubt, thousand-dollar toilettes, boxes at the opera, private yachts, the horse-show, Palm Beach, strings of pearls, and photographs reading from left to right figured largely to the dazzlement of the Harrod vision. With which reflections she would rise up and select one of the toilettes—which, by the way, were nothing like so costly, for Mrs. Edith was an astute and thrifty manager—and would put it on with those inimitable touches of which she had the secret, and would go downstairs to witness the further havoc wrought upon young Harrod, quite as if she were an indifferent third party, spectator of the poor little drama. There is this much to be said for her; she made not the slightest effort to captivate him; Mrs. Gherardi had never in her life made the slightest effort to captivate any man; she was “not that sort.” Yet her career was fairly well starred with sentimental episodes; more than one suitor had written sonnets to Edith’s eyebrows—or committed what other amorous folly may be the equivalent now—

adays; she would recall them sometimes good-humoredly, but without interest.

And there was this much to be said for Cleve Harrod—in fact, Edith did say it to herself with approval—that he never let his infatuation get out of hand. Self-control, native good taste, the traditions of a gentleman or what you choose, the young fellow's endowment included some quality that enjoined him from making either himself or Edith ridiculous. He could teach her a new trick in diving, he could steady the bicycle for her to mount, he could even touch her hand, directing a pool-shot, without any evidence of inward commotion unless it might be a slight catching of his breath, or an accession of color scarcely noticeable with his coat of sunburn. And to be sure he did gaze at and after Edith, and he could not altogether curb a desire to talk and ask questions about her, spite of the attendant risk. Possibly he had an inkling that her friends were accustomed to these manifestations of curiosity, and not likely to look upon them with suspicion.

“She would play very well with practice—she’s got a good eye,” he would remark to Cook with carefully shaded enthusiasm as they lit cigarettes preparatory to another bout at the pool table after Edith’s departure. A game or two afternoons and evenings—to that point had the intimacy surprisingly advanced! “But I expect she’s pretty good at any game, isn’t she?”

Mr. Cook said she was; he believed she won the women’s singles two or three times at the Interstate Tennis matches; up against crack players, you know. Of course that was several years ago; probably she couldn’t do it now. Tennis was a beautiful game, but too violent exercise for anybody but boys and girls.

"Yes. I've never seen any of those expert players, but it must be a fine tournament game," Harrod agreed rather tepidly. "Mrs. Gherardi isn't much more than a girl now, though. She—er—she was married very young, I suppose."

"Twenty-one or two," said Cook, nobly keeping his face straight; he was a humane man.

"Well, that's young to be married and—and—er—to be a widow."

Cook hesitated for the fraction of a second; there were occasions when his particular kind of "collecting" affected him as it did Edith Gherardi, for all his persuasive oratory. It *was* cold-blooded—or, if not quite that, it was at the least, unfair. But after all, this fatuous young Romeo was trying to pump him; it was ingenious and pathetic and funny, but that was what Grover Cleveland was trying to do. At heart he did not care a pin for the society of a commonplace little man old enough to be his father, whose novels he had never heard of, much less read; he only bore with Mr. Cook to facilitate getting at Mrs. Gherardi. Talk about fairness! If it came to that, turn about was surely fair. Why shouldn't he, Cook, allow himself to become expansive, gossipy and confidential, even in the Mephistophelean aim of "collecting" Romeo? Let ethics slide!

"Why, as to her being a widow," he said with humorous caution; "I can't say positively, but I know it's only very recent. Gherardi was killed in the War—I don't remember just when or what battle it was—but towards the last, anyway. We all heard at the time, but it didn't make much impression under the circumstances. He hadn't any friends on this side. I only met him once myself—it was at the wedding—and I wasn't very much taken

with him. Between ourselves, I don't think anybody was either, not even the Rudds themselves—her family, you know. She was a Miss Rudd," said Mr. Cook chattily, but at the same time taking position at the table, his eyes and to all appearances his mind riveted on the game. "Let's see if I can put fourteen in."

The balls smacked together smartly; fourteen went in. "Good enough!" said Cook, getting ready for another shot; he glanced at his opponent with a fleeting grin.

"*'On this side?'*" Cleve echoed. "Was he—wasn't he—?"

"I'll try eleven. If I can just nudge it along the cushion!" announced Cook. "Hey? Why, Gherardi was a German——" Again he bent all his energies, one would have said, to nudging eleven along the cushion, and succeeded; it plopped gently into the pocket. Cook straightened up. "Making it easy for yourself is part of the science of this game," he propounded. "Nine is in a good place for that side-pocket, don't you think?"

"A German?"

"Yes. He was a captain in their army—attached to the Embassy in Washington when she met him, I believe." Mr. Cook made a third shot with the same brilliant success. "If it keeps on this way, I'll be right in Hoppe's class!" said he, in open enjoyment—though whether of this game or of some other he was privately playing, who shall say? At any rate, his next move, while addressing ball number ten, was to dribble forth another little runlet of information about Mrs. Gherardi's past. "They were divorced. That was before the War. She left him and came back over here and got a divorce. But she's a widow *de facto* now anyhow. The divorce doesn't

count any more. Gherardi—Ah-ha-a!” Number ten was pocketed.

Cook stood back for a general survey, and then cast a look around, seeking the cue-rest.

“Here it is,” said the other, stooping. From under the shelter of the table, he prompted: “Gherardi—?”

“Hey!” said Cook absently, adjusting himself and the cue and the rest with minute care. “Maledictions!” He had missed “Hey! Oh yes, I was going to say we all got the idea that Gherardi treated her abominably—and she’s not the woman to stand abominable treatment,” the author threw in, wagging his head sagely. “Of course, nobody knows any of the details. Those things can always be kept quiet, you know. But there couldn’t have been any hitch about her getting the decree, or we would have heard something. It was a plain case of brute, I daresay—German brute at that. Your shot. Oh, I don’t mean he beat her—”

“What!” shouted out young Mr. Harrod, clenching his own fist in a fury. “Beat her—?”

“No, I never heard that he did anything of that kind,” said Cook equably, not at all startled by this outburst, though he might well have been. “As I was saying, there were no details given. But everybody got an idea somehow that it was—er—other women. He had ‘em in the house and spent her money on ‘em—she was the one that had the money, naturally. That’s the sort of American girl these foreigners are always careful to pick out—the ones with money. Her people are very wealthy—Rudd Chemical Company, you know—her father’s one of our big men. I daresay Gherardi thought he was doing very well for himself with such a marriage.”

Cleve uttered an ejaculation of disgust aroused,

as was plain, not merely by the contemplation of the wrong done Edith Rudd, but at the notion of the same wrong done any woman. It came from the depths of a decent man's heart.

"May not be true, you know—about the women, I mean," said Cook, lighting a cigarette. "But anyhow she got the divorce. And Gherardi's got his come-uppance. It's your shot."

"I suppose there's no doubt about his having been killed—?"

"Oh, no. It was published officially," Cook said—and added inwardly: "*You can't go over there and wring his neck for him, my young friend!*" Aloud he repeated: "It's your shot."

Any impartial outsider who had chanced to overhear this outpouring of confidences would scarcely have failed to notice that in so far as regarded Mr. Cook's own affairs, they were really not at all confidential. Spite of their air of intimate disclosure, nothing could have been less self-revealing. At the end, the younger man could have known no more about his talkative companion than he did at the beginning. But Mr. Marshall Cook, although he was quite aware that the best way to set a man to talking about himself is to tell him something about yourself—although that student of human nature was familiar with such wiles and had many times practiced them, he was also sharp enough to know that in this instance, he need not trouble. Cleve did not want to hear about Mr. Cook's past, present and future—good heavens, no! He wanted to hear about Mrs. Gherardi's. A half-hour spent on her history would ere long bring out more of Harrod's than the whole long day devoted to Cook.

"How about that bet with yourself?" his wife asked that evening.

"Neither won nor lost yet," responded the little man cheerfully. "But I may safely say that I have established an atmosphere——" A cryptic statement with which, nevertheless, Mrs. Bessie was satisfied; she looked at him knowingly and smiled.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER mild, eventless Bermudan day went by; and then Mr. Cook discovered in reading the equally mild, eventless newspaper published on the island that Court would convene for the spring term Monday morning at Hamilton, Chancellor Sir Lionel Coke sitting with Associate Justices Littleton and Chitty. Before the opening session there would be service in the Cathedral, and the Right Reverend the Bishop would address the Bench and Bar as usual. Cook was pleasurable excited over this prospect. "We've got to take this in," he said to his wife. "We mustn't miss hearing the gentlemen of the Bench and Bar being told how to behave themselves. It's like the grand jury with us, as I understand; but fancy our opening court with Morning Prayer, according to the Episcopal ritual, and a sermon! What would the firm of Cohen and Strauss do, and little Levi Manischewitz who gets all the contested will cases, and Abrams the authority on libel suits?"

"Isn't the English law like ours?" Mrs. Cook innocently asked.

Her husband corrected her with laughter. "Ours is like the English—founded on it, you know. But there's a difference in the lawyers. I don't know what Sir Lionel Coke would make of the Cohens and Manischewitzes; maybe those names are familiar at the English Bar, too, but somehow I doubt it." He returned to the paper. "It says that the Chancellor

has just come from holding court in Barbadoes. Do you suppose he's on circuit? I must find out. Anyhow, tell Edith, and I'll go order a carriage."

The latter lady, however, was not to be found; Miss Beales with some effort remembered having seen her go out dressed for walking directly after breakfast—or was that yesterday? Miriam was not sure. "One day is so much like another here, a person can't fix anything in their mind," she offered in fatigued explanation. Cook caught a note of complaint or despondency in the girl's voice and looking at her more closely, it struck him that she seemed listless and out of sorts recently, whereas in the first days of their stay he had remarked on the briskness and vitality of her young presence, as typical of the American girl as her crisp shirtwaists, her stylish little head with the hair disposed in symmetrical whorls over each ear, her slim ankles and high skirts and narrow pointed pumps. She had been notably bright, ready, obliging, "full of pep" as Tarvey put it, but now— She drooped, rather than leaned, against the desk.

"You'll be glad to go North again. The climate here seems ideal, but I daresay it doesn't suit everybody," he said kindly. "A whole winter of it is rather too much for *you*, for instance, hey?"

"Oh, the climate's great! I just love it, and it agrees with me fine—I never heard of it's not agreeing with anybody," said Miriam in loyal haste. "Of course the States are my real home—but I wouldn't want to stay there all the year around. Give me Bermuda!" she declared earnestly. "No nasty old snow or blizzards, no worry about coal. And then it's so gay here in the season; such a lot going on the whole time. Don't you think you'll come back next winter?"

Mr. Cook smilingly didn't know, couldn't say so far ahead—thinking meanwhile that she protested altogether too much, poor child! What was pleasure to him was business to the tribe of Beales, and doubtless a most wearisome, thankless business at times. The writer's practiced imagination pictured her at the Adirondack desk all summer long in a setting of mountains and fir-trees with perhaps a chilly little blue Northern lake instead of Harrington Sound and the plantations of onions and lilies; otherwise her life would be the same deadly round of guests arriving, guests departing, in the same periodical litter of wardrobe trunks and hand luggage; there would be the same eternal columns of accounts, the same complaints to be listened to with the same patience, the same information given and interest displayed, a maddening iteration of the same orders. "Lord deliver us all, what an existence!" he ejaculated to his wife, in profound sympathy.

"Oh, she's used to it. She'd miss it dreadfully and feel perfectly lost in any other surroundings, probably. She must just have been a little tired today," said Mrs. Bessie, who was a practical person.

They decided at last to go off to Hamilton without Mrs. Gherardi; and arriving early, they hung about the judicial doors for a considerable while, and witnessed the gradual assembling of the bench and bar, some score of them, strongly resembling all gentlemen of the legal profession the world over, and looking every man as if this were a very tedious and perfunctory performance. Then from police headquarters—which were across the street from the palace of justice—there issued a body of negro constables, some score of them, too, but in distinction to the first arrivals, taking the happy zest of their

race in a public function, soberly swaggering in spick and span uniforms. One of the island victorias drove up with two more radiant flunkeys on the box; and finally the great man, the Chancellor—who was in fact a little man—with a rubicund Georgian face, a white tie-wig set on crooked, and the bright red robe of his office buffeting about his short legs, emerged from the retiring-room between the two associate justices, and they all three got into the chariot—it was obviously a hired one. The constables delightedly and most smartly came to attention; the victoria moved off, followed by the guard; the bench and bar ambled in their wake; and Cook and his wife unostentatiously brought up the rear, keeping to the sidewalk. They were practically the only spectators; a few more Bermudans turned up later in the Cathedral, but the ceremony of opening court appeared on the whole to attract about as much attention as it would have in an American community—that is to say, none at all. The constables were the only people who enjoyed it—marching to the Cathedral, reading the responses, singing the hymns, hearing the lessons, standing and kneeling at the appointed places with a grave childish conceit in showing off their familiarity with the forms and usage of the church. The Right Reverend the Bishop preached a sermon commendably short and in good taste, contriving not to speak of or to the bench and bar as if they were a set of schoolboys, and furthermore not to advise, lecture or instruct the Almighty about the matter in hand. And upon the conclusion of the services everybody about-faced and returned to the courthouse, chancellor, lawyers, constables and all, still investing the occasion with the extraordinary casual decorum possible only to the English, or where the English tra-

dition prevails. Anywhere else the scene would have been theatrical, the participants self-conscious; it is only the Briton who knows how to observe pomp and circumstance in a matter-of-fact style.

"You have to hand it to them," said Cook with his humorous gravity. "Nobody but Englishmen can do it. The Chancellor thinks in his heart that this dressing-up in a wig and a red wrapper is all dashed tom-foolishness; you can't imagine him decking himself out voluntarily in any such toggery like, for example, one of our Knights of Pythias with a sword and a cocked hat full of feathers. The Masonic orders do an incalculable amount of good, and the Sir Knights are among our most valued citizens, but I never saw one of them that could carry off their ceremonial costume with dignity; and when they go to parading, I fear they amuse much more than they edify. The trouble is, I suppose, that they could do good and be valuable without any public demonstration whatever; the costumes and the mummeries are meaningless nowadays. Whereas the Chancellor's red gown is still a symbol of a potent and majestic thing, and he wears it and goes through these antiquated rites as part of his duty, which is a very real, very solemn duty. Nobody likes to swank; but these English understand that a certain amount of swank is desirable in high places. That's the reason they always get on so famously with savage peoples; savages are uniformly great at swanking; so the Englishman goes them one better. He senses the necessity for 'impressing the natives.' Look at those constables! Can you figure their loyalty shaken? Hearts of oak, hey? I say nobody can do it with the English!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Cook absently. She had not been attending to the eminent author's little homily

in rapt interest; what man is a hero to his wife, let alone his valet! Besides, to judge from her distant expression with a faint frown between the eyebrows, there was something on Mrs. Bessie's mind. "I do wonder where Edith went," she said abruptly.

"She couldn't go very far in any direction on the island of Bermuda," said Cook. "And she's quite capable of taking care of herself wherever she is. Why worry? You don't have to act the duenna for Edith."

"Don't I?" his wife retorted. Their eyes met. Cook removed his cigarette and waved the smoke aside with one hand the better to observe her. He was smiling, but Bessie spoke in a troubled voice. "Have you noticed anything? Or is it just my fancy? I don't want to be silly, but—!"

After a slight pause, Cook said: "Well, you can't stop a young man making a fool of himself—at least you and I can't. *She* undoubtedly will, when the time comes; when she gets ready, or when he begins to go it too strong."

"Yes, I know," said the lady uncertainly. "Only—the whole business is so unlike Edith Rudd. It's ridiculous anyhow—!" She gave a resigned shrug, grimacing. "Oh, well!"

In spite of this philosophic conclusion, when they reached the St. Leon just at the luncheon hour, she did look about with some anxiety; and Mrs. Gherardi had not yet come in. Instead, there was Miss Beales still languidly on guard at the desk, and holding converse, but also languidly, with another girl, a girl whom the Cooks had not seen before. She was a slight creature with fair hair in a multitude of small curls markedly like that of a renowned young lady ornamenting the motion-picture stage; this one had delicate little features, blue eyes, a hec-

tic high color, and a sweet treble voice which she was using very fluently and rapidly. She sat on the arm of a chair drawn up to face the desk, with her thin arms folded, her thin legs stretched out; and she had on a vivid purple sweater girt about her with what looked like the white cotton cord and tassels of a curtain over a scant lawn skirt of indeterminate color and not too fresh; her feet in stained and worn canvas boots stuck out in front. About her and all around the room, on the easy-chairs, the Mission tables, the window-seats, the bases of the pillars, everywhere that a square inch of projecting ledge afforded space for them, there were spread out and propped up a raft of tinted photographs. Harrington Sound from every point of the compass, the St. Leon hotel, all the other hotels, the harbors of Hamilton and St. George, Moore's house, capes, coves, reefs without number—one would have sworn that not a hand's breadth of sea or land in the entire archipelago had escaped; there it all was, brilliantly blue and green and roseate; never was known such an industry of camera and crayons.

The apparition of the hotel guests acted as an automatic brake on the girls' tongues; they both fell silent, and the blonde one got up and made a pretense of activity amongst the photographs, rearranging them and shifting them from place to place with the conscious unconsciousness of a showman. It was a species of hint which Cook promptly accepted, as usual.

"Why, what's all this? Why, these are charming!" said he, and fixed his glasses and went up and down the improvised gallery, studying and selecting. "Are they for sale?" he asked superfluously.

"Sure! That one's two and a half," said the yellow curls, trying hard, but unsuccessfully, alas,

to look professionally indifferent; her little face was distressingly eager; her blue eyes begged. "They make nice souvenirs of your trip."

"This is pretty," said Mrs. Cook, following her husband's lead; she picked up the silhouette of a tree against an opalescent back-drop of sea and sky. "Look at this, Marshall! It gives one some idea of the coloring—only the water is bluer, if anything—"

"I know," the girl interposed quickly. "We don't make it as blue as it really is, because the folks at home wouldn't believe it. They'd think it was fixed up, you know."

"That's true—that's good business," said Cook gravely. "How much is this one?"

Yellow Curls said it was three dollars—and then reading, or thinking she read defeat in his expression, added precipitately: "Make 'em both to you for five, though," searching their faces with a kind of desperate hope. Whatever her gifts, salesmanship was not one of them; the spectacle of her was pitiful. Mr. Cook, who wanted nothing less than tinted photographs of Bermudan scenes, felt an insane impulse to buy out her whole stock; sheer humanity demanded it. He compromised, in a return of commonsense, on ten or fifteen dollars' worth; and it was while he was counting out the money—the poor young peddler, meantime, as touching in her ill-concealed relief as she had been in her ill-concealed suspense—and while Miss Beales, who in the very nature of her calling was pretty keen commercially, looked on with a certain suspicion, that Mrs. Gherardi at length rejoined her travelling companions.

Poilu came frisking in advance, and they all saw her sauntering up the road through the hotel gates

with Mr. Grover Cleveland Harrod sauntering alongside, trundling his wheel; he was talking busily. Where the approach forked at a cluster of oleanders that screened the service entrance, the pair halted; he took off his hat; he was a very good-looking, strapping young fellow, tall and tanned, standing bareheaded in the sun. Edith made a light gesture of leave-taking, and resumed her saunter; and the cavalier disappeared around the oleanders—to the kitchen probably, or some such sadly un-cavalier-like destination. Mrs. Cook had been the first to catch sight of them; upon her slight exclamation, Cook looked up from the palm-full of English coins among which he was laboriously picking and choosing; the celebrated novelist had not much of a head for figures. Miss Beales roused from her listless attitude; the vender of pictures wheeled about and stared with wide eyes. They all witnessed the little scene about which there was actually nothing dramatic, in a silence that rendered it dramatic whether or no. So, at any rate, Marshall Cook felt with his story-telling sixth sense; he did not dare to look at the women, fearing to surprise glances of mischief and curiosity.

Mrs. Gherardi came up the steps and into the office, drawing off a pair of loose, gauntleted, buck-skin gloves she was wearing; Poilu jumped up against her skirts and she flapped him lightly on the nose, and looked at the others and laughed, showing all her fine white teeth. For a flashing moment, she was a gay goddess descended from some Olympian height to make merry with this handful of commonplace mortals; it was bewildering to come from under the spell and find only a lean, sandy-haired woman incomparably well-dressed. The two girls remained rigidly silent, but Mrs. Bessie began

to talk in a nervous hurry. Where had Edith been? They were wondering what had become of her! Oh, she had missed it! They went to Hamilton and saw them open Court. My dear, the most stately proceeding! A parade of officials and the Chancellor in red like a Cardinal, and services in the Cathedral—fancy! And then they went back to Court and started impaneling a jury to try a colored man for getting drunk and breaking up a funeral! Starting a row among the mourners, you know! And so on, and so on; Mrs. Cook rattled away till she was out of breath, in a style that caused Mr. Cook, still prodding among the shillings and pence, to remark to himself that now *she* was protesting too much!

"It must have been very amusing; I wish I'd known in time. But I took a walk—went to the place they call the Devil's Hole," said Edith; she moved her eyes over the girl and the congregation of photographs. "Oh? Pictures of Bermuda? Water-colors? No, I see—"

"They make nice souvenirs of your trip," said Miss Curlylocks mechanically. She followed Edith's every movement as the latter took up one card after another.

"I hope this is right?" said Cook apologetically, tendering her the price of his purchases. "Exchange isn't quite the same as it used to be, and my arithmetic is shaky at best, but after painful calculation, I make it—? If it's not enough—?"

She turned towards him, detaching herself from the observation of Mrs. Gherardi almost with a jerk. "Yes, that's right, I guess. *You* see if it isn't, Mirry," she said, scarcely glancing, and fastened on Edith again with a devouring, a rabid interest. Miriam counted the sum over and pronounced it cor-

rect, and Mr. Cook took his pictures from the blonde girl's hands, without her knowing it, apparently.

"They're for sale, of course. I've just got these," said the author to Mrs. Gherardi. Somebody must say something, he reflected, and Bessie's fountain of conversation seemed suddenly to have run dry! "This young lady—they are your own work, I suppose, Miss—?"

"Tarvey," said the Beales girl, unexpectedly intervening to help along. "Yes, she does the coloring, don't you, Soph?"

"Miss Tarvey?"

"Yes—George's sister," Miss Beales volunteered further; and she added with emphasis, even raising her voice a little impatiently: "I was telling 'em you did the coloring, Soph."

This time the other girl heard and answered, withdrawing her gaze from Mrs. Gherardi, and glancing all around in sharp and uneasy inquiry, perhaps fearful of having betrayed some lack of sophistication. "Yes, I do 'em," she said, again going through the motions of arranging the things. "Great works of art, aren't they?" And here Miss Tarvey achieved a laugh which, like the rest of her forced and conscious by-play, was heart-rending. Cook was within an ace of bursting into warm commendations with the assurance that the coloring was beautifully done; but upon the instant premonition that that was exactly what his wife and Mrs. Gherardi would do, refrained. And to be sure they did do it, in chorus with the weakening of effect which invariably accompanies civilities of that nature. Miss Tarvey was not convinced, not even appreciative of the good intention.

"Oh, they aren't anything, I know *that!* They're just *something*," she said with an air at once de-

spondent and defiant and subtly hostile. Somehow the contradictory statement could be understood. "I've never had any lessons. It's not what I do regularly. I just took it up when we came here—just picked it up. For some kind of work, you know. George, that is, my brother, I expect you've met him around here—he doesn't want me to, but I'd rather."

Bessie Cook murmured something about the pictures being *charming*, and about its being *wonderful* that Miss Tarvey could paint so well without any *lessons*, etc., and looked appealingly to her husband who later confessed that he had seldom been so completely gravelled for some nice thing to say! That unhappy little creature with all the implications of sickness and failure and hopeless rebellion about her—and "George" at the very moment probably stewing away in the kitchen over their luncheon—! The whole thing, Mr. Cook ruefully admitted, was beyond *him*. It was Mrs. Gherardi who rescued the situation by the characteristically practical measure of laying aside half a dozen photographs and inquiring their price.

When they came out of the dining-room, Miss Tarvey and her collection had disappeared, to the unspoken relief of at least two members of the party, to wit: Mr. and Mrs. Marshall Cook. What Mrs. Gherardi felt or thought, if anything, was beyond guess-work; she might not have remarked the overweening interest George's sister took in herself, being, as has been repeatedly stated, inured to stares. The Devil's Hole expedition she described as mildly interesting. You came to a barred wooden door in the hillside, alluringly secret and mysterious of aspect like the doors of enchantment in the Arabian Nights. The open sesame thereto was a couple of

shillings; an old hag came out of a low-browed house near by and took the money and opened the door, and for another shilling provided a handful of moldy bread to feed the fish. That was all there was inside—fish. It was a kind of cave or grotto in the coral rock with four or five feet of water in it, and open to the sky overhead; the effect was something like being at the bottom of a well. There was a slight wooden bridge spanning the pools from ledge to ledge where one stood; and the fish swarmed around below and shoved and crowded and leaped up snapping at the lumps of bread, and when they caught a mouthful scuttled off like lightning to devour it all to themselves, with a greed and savagery horrid to witness, though they were very beautiful and unusual—all the colors of the rainbow, and a great many varieties. There were some monstrous lobsters, too, and an uncanny black pilot-fish that stayed by himself motionless in a tiny cove. The tide-water came up there, but once the fish got in or were put in, they never got out; and they never preyed on one another, though normally that would have been their habit. They loafed and waited for the tourists' bread. It was like an enchanted cave; it reminded one of old wild legends about people being lured off into fairyland and kept there forever, or of Circe—

“Where did you get your information?” Cook wanted to know. “The old woman—?”

“Oh no, I didn't ask her. She'd have charged at the rate of a shilling an answer!” Edith said with a laugh. “No, Mr. Harrod happened along on his wheel, just as I was starting back. He told me.”

CHAPTER VI

It was after a matter of half a dozen trips up and down that the monotony of sea-life began to pall on young Harrod. The journey from New York to Bermuda and return, unlike most high seas travelling, is not fraught with potential adventure; Cleve found that there was little to expect beyond occasional flaws of fine weather when the decks would be very happy and animated, and he and his superior would be kept busy in the bar and lounge; and other days, much more frequent, of laboring for hours in heavy seas, the canvas curtains slatting furiously in the gale, water sluicing underfoot, the waves white with squall after squall. The glamour dimmed as quickly as the polish on the hand-rails. Quite possibly too—although this the young man with his queer, inconsistent, stiff-necked pride would never have acknowledged—Mr. Cleve's spirits were more or less borne down by the isolation of his position. To be sure this job compared favorably enough with his previous jobs, as to the social level whereon it placed him; the late Mr. Ward McAllister would have to be called from his circle of shades—doubtless the most exclusive one—to fix the exact difference in grade, socially, between a soda-fountain clerk and a steward on board an ocean liner; the point is too fine for most of us. Cleve himself, had he chosen to analyze his obscure dissatisfaction, would probably have put it down bluntly to the fact that as a clerk he could get away from his environment at times,

as a steward never. Uniformed and slated for specific duties, he beheld himself automatically uniformed and slated in the mind of every passenger on the ship; he might voyage with them forever, not one would note a feature of his face, or remember him an hour. Nice old ladies patronized him; mothers commandeered his services for seasick youngsters without thanks or apology; young fellows of his own age spoke to him with an unconscious change of voice and manner; girls like his sister Greta never spoke to him at all. He was tipped, and he must take the tips or make himself ridiculous, and fall out of credit with his fellow-stewards who were already inclined to look upon him with a certain resentful suspicion that he was out of his class. The situation began to be absurd and intolerable. Added to that, he had not an instant's leisure, not an instant's privacy, except for the two days at either end of the run when ten to one he found himself thoroughly out of the humor for writing, so that it was impossible to settle down to it. Especially was this the case on reaching New York when he would go to the theatre, roam the streets, idle about billiard-halls, all the while irritably conscious of wasting time, yet irritably averse to work. One might suppose that the Bermudan atmosphere, on the contrary, would exercise a beneficent, tranquilizing influence, but if so, it still lacked whatever qualities inspire to work; Cleve dawdled away his two days there as at the other end, though in different ways and perhaps more creditably.

He used to go out regularly to the Hotel St. Leon, escaping from the vessel the moment she docked and he could get into his shore-going clothes. Let the rest of the stewards have the rich pickings of the travelling world whose hand-luggage they were so

officious to carry! Let the pretty girls, the eternal brides-and-grooms, the maids and governesses and riding-masters and golfing professionals, let the portly, successful business men who came down to fish and sail and drink English porter and give Mother and the children a good time, and cheat themselves into the belief that they were taking a rest—a rest with one feverish eye on the ticker!—let all this crew bestow themselves as best they might; they would get no further assistance from Steward Cleveland Harrod—whose name they never heard and whose existence they had already forgotten. He retaliated by forgetting or trying to forget theirs; and assuaged his loneliness in a society that at least regarded him as a man, not merely a steward.

The St. Leon, even in the height of the season, retained its pleasantly countryfied character; the Beales family were on terms of intimacy with all the white members of their staff, and on terms of friendliness with their guests. Their kindly, self-respecting, essentially American minds could not contemplate directing a hotel in any other more rigid, lofty and impersonal a fashion. "We aim to keep a home-like place," Lester N. would say. "Same as we do in the States. Why, sir, I have people that come back to me year after year, and they always say: 'Mr. Beales, your place is just like home!' I tell them they couldn't compliment me higher. You can get style like the Waldorf anywhere, but you can't get that home-y feeling. That's the way I look at it."

"It's the nearest thing to home I've got," Cleve said warmly; and told the truth. They accepted him as he stood, without question, and made him one of themselves in simple confidence. On his visits Mi-

riam contrived a place for him to sleep somewhere, no matter how crowded the hotel might be; there were all sorts of attics and crannies under its hybrid roofs where he camped out with a cot, a shelf and looking-glass, a book or two. He took a dip in the sea by way of bath, and shaved in a corner of any dressing-booth in the early morning before the guests' world was stirring. The young people made a lark of his sudden appearances and disappearances by which the habitués of the St. Leon were sometimes mystified; one week Cleve would be stationed in charge of the cellars, or helping Miriam in the office, or active around the boats and bathing-beach where he was tremendously popular with the small boys and somewhat embarrassingly so with young ladies, his prowess as a waterman exciting remark, so that lessons in swimming were in high demand; and the next week, the next day, he was gone, none knew whither! "What's become of that big, tall young fellow that's been around here?" was a question so often asked that it not improbably moved Mr. Beales at length to open the negotiations which ended by the "big, tall young fellow" becoming a permanent feature of the establishment. His duties were never very accurately defined; they were not likely to be of much higher character than those on board the *Fort Victoria*; but by that time—that is, towards the middle of the winter—Cleve was ready to consider any change a change for the better.

He saw a good deal of Tarvey whenever the latter could spare any time from his saucepans. George had "made good," as he told Cleve with both pride and relief, while admitting humorously that it was rather contrary to his own expectations; "I had a nerve to answer Beales' ad at all," he said, "I

didn't believe I could cook good enough for a hotel—depended on what kinda hotel it was, of course. But you never know what you can do till you try, and anyhow I just naturally *had* to do something. Soph was——" he broke off, nightmare memories visibly returning on him. "My, but I was scared!" Collecting himself after a pause he went on: "I *had* to do something. The ad said Bermuda, and I thought to myself: 'Well, if we can just get there, I can always get some kind of work, if I don't stick at this. I didn't know much about Bermuda, only it was warm so Soph could stand it. Well then, if I didn't land the job! I had luck. Beales' man that he'd got to cook laid down on him right at the last minute, and Beales would have taken most anybody; he was like me, he *had* to! There was three other men, but he picked me; he's told me since that he liked my looks somehow. Beales is white, anyway,'" said George with strong feeling. "Yes, sir, he's one white man. I told him about Soph, and he advanced her passage down and lemme work it out afterwards. That was white of him. When you stop to think about it, he didn't know me from Adam's off ox, and I might have done him some way; anybody can see I ain't any souse, but I might have been crooked or just plain good-for-nothing. He chanced it; that was white."

Cleve quoted his quondam associate, the purser of the *Fort Victoria*. "Well, they have police in Bermuda, same as New York. They aren't so slow."

"Yeah, I know. Of course he maybe figured on that," said Tarvey, grinning slightly. "Still and all—they've been mighty good to Soph, too. Her and Miriam took a liking to one another right off."

He found quarters for his sister with the widow of a seafaring man of bygone days, a Mrs. Clapp

who kept a little ice-cream and candy-shop on the Hamilton Road; notions might also be bought there and bicycles awaited hire in a lean-to of the white coral limestone house. During the season the place had quite a lively trade, and George held it as another instance of his good luck that he had been able to get Sophy accommodations there; it was, of course, highly desirable that she too should have something to do, some steady employment, both for her own sake and to eke out the Tarvey finances, but her slight strength was equal only to the lightest of tasks; and it turned out, providentially, that the various small duties about Mrs. Clapp's establishment just answered. She could not officiate at the ice-cream freezers—in fact the proprietress preferred to deal out the commodity that went by the name of ice cream, herself; she had a measuring eye. But Sophy dressed the tables, and waited on the candy jars and hairpins and souvenir postcards, and even—as her health mended—was promoted to the management of the bicycle department, supplemented by the rout of colored children who were constantly hanging about, and for some such consideration as a gum-drop would wheel bicycles in and out by the hour. The girl threw apace in this mild round; the cough left her, her thin cheeks and arms filled out; she had a good appetite and slept famously, to George's huge content and peace of mind. It just suited her, he declared, not only the climate of Bermuda, but every circumstance of life there; she would have been unhappy in idleness, but this work was not too hard and brought in a little money; and best of all there were always plenty of people around and something doing all the time, so that she never felt restless or lonesome. "Me for Bermuda!" he would proclaim happily. And if you

wanted to know *why*, if you insisted on being *shown*, just look at Soph! Did you ever see such a change in a person in your life? Remember how peaked she was when they came down, and just look at the color she had now!

She had indeed, and what was more significant perhaps, it was permanent nowadays. Miss Tarvey was as observant and adaptable as American young women in general, and it was not long before she noted, on her occasional visits to the hotel, that too brilliant cheeks and lips had ceased to be the strict vogue—at any rate in those realms which, again with a feminine astuteness thoroughly American, she perceived to be truly “swell.” Thenceforward *à bas rouge* and lipstick. Better be dead, out of the world, than out of the style. She was not always so sagacious about her choice of attire; good taste, alas, did not exist for Sophy. To be in the very forefront of the fashion was the only good taste the little ex-chorus girl knew.

Mr. Harrod, between trips and upon finally taking up residence at the St. Leon, spent not a little of his time at the Clapp resort; and as he had outgrown any youthful fancy for all-day suckers, only rode a bicycle for convenience, and could not in conscience have been profoundly attracted by the Widow Clapp who was old enough to be his grandmother and wore a growth of moustache nearly as vigorous as his own, it must be surmised that he loitered there for some other reason. Yet Cleve himself did not know what it was. He would have sworn that he was not the least in love with Sophy; it was the poetic frailty of her presence that charmed him. He was reminded vaguely of antique madonnas with their wistful lips, their pure and tender brows, of pictures by Watts, of the Blessed Damozel, of the

virgin heroines of Arthurian idyls. He felt a capacity to protect and defend her which perhaps flattered some obscure sex instinct. At the bottom of his heart he was aware, not without ironic amusement and a certain distaste for his own facile emotions that Sophy's mind, albeit an honest, workaday mind, by no means matched her pathetically beautiful body; she was a good girl, likely to suspect the Enids and Damozels and other ladies—she would certainly call them ladies—to whom he compared her, of not being quite respectable, or if respectable, of being at the least "nutty." Excitement and a mink wrap and dining at the Ritz in a large hat with paradise plumes represented fairly well Sophy's idea of Heaven; she was, in short, perfectly sane and normal and material-minded like ten thousand thousand girls all over the United States, all over the world. And as to his own high, chivalric impulses, pshaw! Stocky little George with his snubbed features, his cook's apron, his plain man's sense of duty and responsibility, was the only protector Sophy needed; few women could show a better one, or as good, for that matter.

Thus Cleve, in private; yet he went on lingering around Sophy for the curious aesthetic pleasure it afforded him, without ever suspecting himself of philandering. He would have been quick enough to detect another man; but, to do the young fellow justice, it never came into his head that his attentions might be laid to sentimental interest, much less that she or any other girl in the circumstances might begin to feel a sentimental interest in *him*. In love with her? Why, he never even touched her hand! Sophy in love with him? Thank you, he was not quite such a conceited fool as to believe *that*!

But oh, those blue eyes! He practiced writing

rondeaux about them; indeed, first and last, Sophy was the theme of a good deal of the verse which he was working over in spare moments that Bermudan winter. He was as secretive about it as ever, but Mrs. Beales, going about the hotel rooms on house-wifely errands, or the colored myrmidons, notoriously magpies for curiosity, or even Miriam, though she was not of either a prying or tell-tale disposition, must have come across the traces of Mr. Cleve's literary activities, odds and ends of crumpled manuscript or what-not, judging from the reports that presently got into circulation; Cleve, of course, was the last person to hear them.

"Say, you write, don't you?" Sophy asked him one day.

"Sure! I can read, too!" said Cleve, realizing on the instant that he had been found out, but hoping to turn aside inquiry by a little judicious levity. "Read and write and do sums in my head."

But Sophy persisted. "I mean write pieces—poetry and stuff like that. You do, don't you?"

"Well, sometimes. That is, I try to," he had to confess.

"Are they to print? Did you ever have any of 'em printed?"

"Y-yes. A few."

He was afraid of the admiring awe that humbles more than any criticism; but, to his surprised relief, Sophy did not seem at all impressed, though she looked interested and speculative.

"How much did it cost?" she demanded.

"Hey? *Cost?*" stammered the author, taken aback.

"Yes. To have them printed? What did you have to pay?"

It was her turn to be disconcerted; in fact, she

bridled a little resentfully at Cleve's laughter, flashing her blue eyes. "Well, what's funny? I don't know anything about how you do writing. I just *asked*. Where's the laugh come in?"

Cleve explained that in the rare cases under discussion he had not had to pay anything, he had been paid; otherwise these products would not have gotten into print at all—"And no loss!" he added, smiling still but a trifle acidly. "I could have done better—I could make them a great deal better, with a little more work."

"Oh, *they pay you*? Well, of course, I knew people that wrote did get paid, but I thought it was for books and—well, shows; on that order, you know. The leading man with our show, Johnny DeRoos—I guess you've heard of him—he's on the big time now with a sketch he wrote himself. I bet it's a scream. He's the best I ever saw. You'd laugh your head off to see some of the dance-steps he takes; and then he'll lose his balance—he just pretends to, of course, he don't really—and sit down hard—! I'd love to see his sketch, I'll bet it's a riot." She finished pensively, her eyes on the distance. Cleve divined where her thoughts were, with the footlights, the orchestra tuning up, the rumor of the entering audience; with his quick, sympathetic imagination he saw her as she saw herself, standing in the wings, taut, expectant, ready for the signal, in her fleshings and iridescent draperies, bare-armed with tinsel roses—oh, poor fragile little unit of the "*attendants, peasants, bridesmaids, dancing-girls, etc.*!" A wave of pity engulfed him; he took her hand; and it must be said that Sophy's little hand cuddled down into his big, brawny one, most encouragingly.

"You don't want to go back on the stage again,"

he said paternally—at least he meant to be paternal. “That’s not the life for a little thing like you.”

“Oh, I don’t know,” said Sophy, in a small, rather tremulous voice.

“Well, you’re not going, anyhow.”

“Why, who’s running me, I’d like to know?”

“George won’t let you. He told me so,” Cleve declared triumphantly; he wondered why she flung away with a pettish movement of the shoulders.

The fact that he “wrote” being now established and noised abroad, Cleve dolefully awaited some such kindly meant persecution as he had had to endure in old days at home; and lo, he got off scot-free! “Hear you’re writing, Cleve? Well, I declare! Didn’t know we had a writer here,” was all that Mr. Beales said, and more than anyone else said. Cleve laughed to recognize ever so faint a trace of pique in his astonishment; he thought his self-importance worthily rebuked. He should have known that these busy, useful people could not spare time to make a to-do over him, even if they had been so inclined; so long as he, like themselves, attended to the work which he was hired and paid to attend to, it made no difference to them what else he did. He might essay writing verses or tight-rope walking or flying toy-balloons, it was all one to the St. Leon. Unquestionably every member of the hotel force had a personal taste in recreation, which none of the others interfered with or criticized or was concerned about in the slightest degree. It was refreshing, this live-and-let-live spirit, rendering needless, as he presently perceived, those petty devices for concealment which had always irked him. He could go about with a volume of Yeats or Maeterlinck in his pocket, he could sit up all night long reading or writing, he could wander out to the head-

land with a pipe and a sheaf of manuscript whenever and as often as he chose—during his off hours—without exciting notice or comment. Now and then, it was true, Tarvey would poke a little fun at his “high-brow” diversions, or Miriam asked a question which, by the way, was invariably sensible and to the point; but in the main, he was let peacefully alone, and in this atmosphere of liberty, accomplished more in study and work than in his whole career hitherto.

Off hours became more frequent as the season waned. One after one the big hotels at Hamilton and St. George closed up; the golf-links were vacated; the riding-horses shipped home. Home went the driving parties, the bridge players, the yachtsmen who had made the St. Leon verandahs gay with their lunch tables, their striped silk blazers, their stunning sports millinery. There would be only a handful of visitors in the dining room and lounge of an evening, and these mostly plain folk who though they were on pleasure bent had eminently frugal minds, coming down on one boat and going back the next, after only two or three days on the Island. “You can see all there is to see in no time, and there isn’t anything to *buy* in Bermuda,” one lady told Miriam aggrievedly; she felt that she had been inveigled thither on false representations. Miriam was smilingly non-committal, but Sophy Tarvey who had come over to the hotel with colored photographs—a mercantile enterprise upon which she had recently embarked—piped up with spirit.

“You can get darling hats at some of the Hamilton places. Only twelve and fifteen dollars for what you pay thirty-five for at home.”

“Really? Is that one of them you have on?” inquired the other, cruelly surveying Sophy’s sorry

headgear through a lorgnette. She was a middle-aged woman, doubtless a good woman, a church member, and Sophy's young beauty offended her mortally. The girl flushed all over face under that hateful stare; she bit her lips, a sudden brightness springing in her eyes. Mr. Cleveland Harrod felt an ungentlemanly longing to climb over the desk and shake the older woman out of her shoes.

"Confounded old hag!" he growled to Miriam afterwards. "There isn't a hat in creation that would make her look like anything but a scarecrow. What made her act like that? Sophy hadn't said anything."

"Oh, she just didn't like it in Bermuda, or she was kind of mad or tired or something, and she took it out on Soph," said Miriam. She gave a little sigh as if tired herself, leaning on the desk and idly fingering a pen. "You think a lot of Soph, don't you?" she said.

"Why—yes—I—I think a lot of George to begin with," said Cleve, rather uncomfortably startled. "She's all he's got in the world, and she isn't strong and—and—" he floundered among too many explanations.

Miriam did not look at him, perhaps out of tact or kindness; hotel-keepers must have an unlimited supply of both. She twirled the pen end for end, making tiny dots on the blotter with every revolution. "A person can't help but be fond of Sophy," she said with another involuntary sigh. "She's so pretty."

"Anyhow, I like Bermuda," Cleve affirmed stoutly, getting a second wind. "Old Mrs. Thin-gummy made me tired the way she talked."

"There's always somebody like that," said Mi-

riam with resignation. "However, we're about through down here, now."

"I hate to think this winter's over."

"It's not over yet; three weeks more. And you can't tell what's going to happen in three weeks."

The prophetess whose name Miss Beales bore might have authorized that speech. With the next boat there descended upon them the deceptively innocuous-looking Cook couple, the hawk-like Mrs. Gherardi with her *ne plus ultra* wardrobe, her impossible homely good looks. Miriam hated her from the minute she saw Cleve's gaze follow her out of the room.

CHAPTER VII

“MISS TARVEY brings in a new element,” Cook said to his wife, after Celeste had combed out the lady’s plentiful flaxen tresses and retreated for the night. The tinted photographs were strung along the bureau, and Bessie gave them a doll scowl of prodigious significance.

“Miss Tarvey is an element that has been here from the beginning,” she informed him, and then, with a surface irrelevance: “Marshall, where *are* we heading?”

He retorted flippantly in a slang somewhat out of date that we didn’t know where we were going, but we were most certainly on our way! “Can’t be any doubt about that. It’s a new version of the triangle—and I thought there was nothing new under the sun, especially in the triangle line! A man and two women, but none of them married; what a departure from the classics!”

“And what a theme for Marshall Cook to work up, I daresay. Your eye-glasses are gleaming like—like an ogre’s,” said his wife with an amusement that did not wholly banish the uneasiness from her face. “Celeste says it’s a *partie carrée*”—and as Cook uttered an exclamation, his expression sobering markedly on a sudden, Bessie hastily went on—“Oh, I know one isn’t supposed to gossip with a servant. At the same time, it’s impossible to prevent—I’ve had Celeste so many years—of course I never *encourage* her—she wouldn’t say anything

outside, she's very discreet. After all, a French-woman—and it must have been abysmally dull for her down here. *Enfin!*" She wound up this not too clear or coherent argument with a gesture after Celeste's own fashion, disclaiming responsibility.

"I understand," said the little man, twisting the peak of his beard with thoughtful eyes; "only who's the fourth one, according to Celeste?"

"Oh, she wouldn't mention any names. Celeste knows too much for *that*, of course. It's all innuendo."

Cook stared for an instant, then wagged his head solemnly. "The feminine code is too much for me," said he. "I give it up! But who *is* the fourth? Celeste doesn't—er—intimate that Tarvey has fallen a victim to Edith, too? Come now, isn't that just a little too strong—as Celeste herself would say?"

"No, nothing of the sort! The idea! No, it's—" Mrs. Cook hesitated, stopped short. If it had been on her tongue to tell him what pitiful secret of Miriam Beales' she or the sharp-eyed, sharp-tongued French woman had ferreted out, some feeling of sex-loyalty arrested her. Mrs. Marshall Cook, she who had been Bessie Grace, the granddaughter of a huge fortune, had lived all her forty years in a world where a kind of sophisticated frankness prevailed; you could say what you chose, be as caustic or as loose of tongue as you pleased, within limits which everybody recognized, but nobody could define. Truth, charity, common-sense, a certain decency, might all be jettisoned to make an epigram without infringement of the code, and many members of her circle took full advantage of the fact, even Bessie herself sometimes yielding to the temptation. For all that, she had her reserves of humanity, her standards, her inhibitions. "It's the Tarvey

girl that I'm interested in——" she kept on smoothly. "Never mind Edith! But that poor little thing has the ungrateful rôle. This young Harrod must be the only *gentleman* she has ever met——"

"Oh, young Harrod is a *gentleman* at present, is he?" inquired her husband, raising his eyebrows.

"Why, of course! Anybody can see it. Celeste says he comes from home," said Bessie, and named their Ohio city. "I never met any Harrods; the place is getting so big, you can't know everybody. But his people must be nice, anyone can see. Stop laughing! Did you know all this about him already?"

"I? Not a thing!"

"I thought you were so cocksure of finding out his whole history in a jiffy!"

"I will yet. Give me time."

"Time! We have too much time left as it is!" said Mrs. Cook, nervously. "I wish now that we had come down in the season when everybody comes. We could have gone to one of the bigger hotels—only they're so tiresome. But even if we had come here, it would have been swarming with people, not nearly deserted the way it is now; there would have been too much going on for anything to happen."

Mr. Cook had no comment to make on this rather remarkable statement; he smoked stolidly, regarding his wife through half-closed eyes. "The whole thing is absolutely insane, anyhow! Who would ever imagine that she would behave this way?" said Bessie; and he met her appealing look unhelpfully, yet with an air of understanding.

For the next day or so, the little man of letters, notwithstanding his promises to his wife and bets with himself, appeared to have abandoned his amateur detective activities on the trail of Mr. Cleve-

land Harrod. There were no pool-games, no chats over the desk, or on the porch, only conventional pleasantries when they encountered. To be sure the weather was fine, a long expected excursion to the reefs with the famous glass-bottomed boats finally came off, and small parties got together with haste here in the shank of the season sporadically enlivened the beach and kept the hotel busy. Sophy with her photographs was about the place early and late, and Mr. Cook transferred his interest, in some degree to her. Maybe the blue eyes accounted for it, maybe his insatiable habit of "collecting"; at any rate, without apparent effort or intention, he established a certain friendliness between himself and the Tarveys, both sister and brother, for George likewise came under the spell of the little man's interest; if not so genuine as it seemed, or if assumed for not entirely unselfish reasons, it was at least kind. Mrs. Cook, not to be outdone, made some advances to the girl which, however, were not conspicuously successful; Sophy would not talk to *her*. "None of them will. I'm going to give up trying—with women anyhow. We are always a little suspicious of one another. We do so much pretending," Bessie said with not quite a smile, not quite a sigh. "I've asked Marshall how he does it, what he and the cook and the cook's sister talk about, for instance, but he only laughs and says if he were to tell me how they talk, everybody would stop talking to him! And they know he writes novels; that would put you or me on our guard, but it doesn't seem to make any difference to *them*. They go right on confiding in him."

She was mistaken; it had made enough difference to move one of them to an unheard-of, an incredible course of action—for Sophy Tarvey, that is. Upon

hearing from Cleve what Mr. Cook's profession was, together with some comment from the young man who was not without taste and critical judgment—a cat may look at a king!—Sophy straightway went and hunted *Venetian Nights* out of the penny library, and made a gallant effort to read it. One may conjecture that this was not altogether for the author's sake; Sophy thought Mr. Cook was a nice little old gentleman, but she would never have struggled through *Venetian Nights* to curry favor with him, under ordinary circumstances. No, there must have been some other idea in the back of that pretty head, beneath that shining thatch of curls; but she was really too honest and straightforward to carry out any sort of axe-grinding project. The *Nights* were too much for her; nor indeed was she the only one who could not make great headway amongst the subtleties of that well-known work. "It's kind of long, and there isn't much happens; and then reading always makes me so sleepy, I just can't hold my head up," she confessed to Cook, ingenuously. "Of course I know it's *good*, only I guess I can't appreciate it. Was it the first thing you ever wrote?"

"One of the first, yes."

"And you been doing it ever since? Just writing, and nothing else—on the side, you know?"

"Just writing, yes."

"Well, do you really, honest-to-goodness like it?"

"Like to write? Why, yes," said Cook in some surprise. "That's necessary, isn't it? To like the thing we do?"

"I know, but it's so funny for people to just want to write," Sophy reflected. "Seems as if they'd rather have a regular job they'd be sure of." She considered a moment, eyeing him with a certain ap-

praisal. "I suppose, though, you always sell everything. You know everybody in the business and kinda got your name up by this time. You don't have any trouble."

"Well—er—one doesn't do anything ~~without~~ taking *some* trouble," said Cook, non-committally.

"Uh-huh," Sophy agreed, but with a faint note of doubt. Seeing is believing; and here was Mr. Cook with his clothes—stylish London-tailor clothes at that—lined with money, and going around everywhere, and having it pretty easy—needn't talk about trouble to *her!* Why couldn't Cleve Harrod make a hit like that? Cleve had this writing bug, too, and if Mr. Cook could write those old *Nights* and get away with it, Cleve ought to could do it, sure! And weren't writers the funniest ever, anyhow? "I guess you're—now—artistic—if you know what I mean," she said a little diffidently. "Artistic people look at things so different. I used to see a lot of how they do when I was on the stage, so that's how I know."

Mr. Cook, by this time, was in possession of the Tarvey family history in full; he knew every detail of Sophy's brief and all but fatal career with the "Boardwalk Belles" from beginning to end; the shabby epic lost nothing by her recital with its simple and unconscious revelations. Cook followed her in imagination with the troupe of fifth-rate mountebanks to any number of dingy, fifth-rate towns, up early and late, scrambling for the trains, housing half-a-dozen to a room at dreadful squalid little hotels, underpaid or not at all, forever in danger of sheriffs and attachments. Sophy liked the life until she began to "feel bad." Of course, there were drawbacks; when the other ladies got to scrapping and calling names, for instance—— They were not

real refined, all of them. "I never got into any fusses; I believe in keeping yourself *to yourself*," she said primly. "You can be polite and get along with everybody, but not have too much to do with any one person, because that always starts something. And then there's pretty nearly always some fresh fish of a man that you got to turn down—Oh! Gee, I guess I oughtn't to have said that to you, Mr. Cook. Well, it's out now, and I'm not going to take it back. Besides, it's true; having a man around is the surest way to get in bad. Most of the hair-pulling matches was over some man. *Not for mine!*"

The novelist listened in silence, marvelling inwardly at the saving strength of character revealed by these innocent utterances. Sophy had no traditions, no taught or inherited standards, scarcely any up-bringing, a limited intelligence; to many a girl even of much more exalted class, such comeliness as hers would have brought swift and sure disaster; but somewhere within this little daughter of the people abode some sterling and stalwart quality eminently the people's; there was iron in that delicate fibre.

"I daresay in the end you were glad you had a brother to fall back on," he suggested.

"I'll say so!" Sophy assented with emphasis. "But don't get George started on me being on the stage—he'll never let up!" she warned with a half-mischiefous smile. "You see he was in the army, and he can't get over my going without him knowing. Well, I couldn't help it; he was over there in France, and I couldn't wait to get word from him. I knew he'd never hear to it, anyhow," she summed up with so much naïveté that Cook laughed outright. He was already acquainted with George's preju-

dices, the latter expressing himself profanely and at considerable length on the "Belles" and Sophy's experiences with them to whomsoever would listen. For that matter, honest George, to whom it seldom occurred to gossip about his own life and aims and achievements, would talk by the hour, as has been demonstrated, about his sister. All his interests, all his affection had been centered on "the kid" since her babyhood; he thought her the most beautiful creature in the world; that she was patently not the most brilliant-minded troubled him not a jot. George belonged with that sufficiently large division of men who look upon the mental capacity of women with humorous indifference; provided the shes are pretty and clinging, who wants them to be bright?

"Soph's been reading you up, seems?" he said to the eminent author, frankly. Unlike many persons of higher claims to consideration with whom Cook came in contact, George was not in the least afraid of him; that he wrote books and had his name in print did not seem a matter of superlative importance to George; a man must have a trade of some kind. "The kid's not much on the read. She must want to get solid with you," he said in open amusement. "What's the answer?"

"Curiosity, I suppose," said Cook. "She told me she didn't make out very well."

It was one of the times when they went in swimming together, in the late afternoon, George being wont to take a dip and get himself "all freshened up" as he said, immediately before the arduous dinner hour, if possible. They journeyed a short distance up the beach, beyond the bathing-houses, and towards the mouth of the inlet, ostensibly on account of a fine deep pool meet for diving when the tide

was in; at heart both had a masculine fancy for the greater quiet and independence of this retreat. It was Cleve's business to be on hand for the bathing-parties of hotel guests and tourists; this very afternoon he might be seen out at the raft, teaching Mrs. Gherardi some new stroke. Mrs. Cook, in a charming beach costume, watched them from the St. Leon verandah, a perfect Casabianca, a Roman soldier of a chaperone, Cook told her afterwards. He and Tarvey dived and splashed in care-free serenity; none of theirs the banked fires ravaging young Harrod, the acid self-investigations of Edith Gherardi, the social anxieties of Mrs. Cook—no, indeed. *Not for them!*

"She said it was all different stories in the book, and she picked out one with a name that she said sounded like it must be about wedding-presents! Wasn't that *girl* all over, though?" said George, vastly entertained by this literary experiment. "By what she said, though, it was a frost. Not a wedding in it, no sludge love-making, nor nothin'ing."

"She must have got hold of *Thirty Pieces of Silver*," said the author. "That's one of the titles."

"Sounds like it all right. Kid supposed it must be forks and spoons, I guess. Nothin' doin'! It just means jack, doesn't it?"

"Yes. It's an—er—an allusion—I mean it's taken from a story in the Bible."

"Oh, the Bible!" said Tarvey, ceasing to smile. The Bible was associated in his mind with churches, sermons, Sabbath-day severities, and should be referred to with respect. He looked at the older man rather curiously, wondering that anybody not a minister should be on a footing of such intimacy with the Bible as his words suggested. Read the

Bible like any other book, like the morning-paper! George would as soon have thought of carousing in a cemetery. "By what Soph said the fellow in the story was kinda down and out, and this other fellow comes along and offers to show him some get-rich-quick scheme, if he'll give him a rake-off, somehow," he said tentatively. "So this here first fellow, he makes a deal with him—of course it's a phony scheme—but it goes through, and he gets the coin, only that ain't the end. She didn't say how it ended; I guess she didn't get that far."

"How do you think it ought to end?" asked the writer. "Here's a man that sells himself out and gets the price. What would happen to him after that?"

They had climbed out of the water, and were both spread on their backs on the sand, in the sun. Tarvey rolled over, plucked a spear of the omnipresent wire-grass of Bermuda and chewed it reflectively. "He'd go to the Pen," he said. "He'd get found out and sent up."

"Supposing he didn't get found out, though? What would his life be like? Just the same as if he had always been an honest man?"

"Well, if they never got anything on him——" George halted abruptly, chewing, pondering. Cook got up and searched the pockets of his coat lying on a shelf of rock nearby; he came back with cigarettes and silently offered them to the other, who silently accepted. After an interval of frowning meditation, sitting hunched together with arms embracing his knees and eyes exploring the horizon, he said: "Say, Mr. Cook, I get the idea. That fellow might as well be inside the Penitentiary as out for all the fun he got out of living, after he done that thing. Say, you're dead right."

"It hardly ever pays to sell out," observed the little man.

"I get you. He'd be all the time worrying for fear they'd find out, and even if they didn't he couldn't have no good opinion of himself. Of course everybody's done things he's ashamed of—men, I mean—you know; but this is different. It's the money. Yeah, he'd have a grand time—not!" said George, forcibly ironical. "But I didn't know there was things like that in the Bible."

"Oh, yes. By and large, there's a good deal—something to fit every man's case, I think. Not hell-fire and all that; just plain everyday things."

George smoked and considered a while; his next words showed a not unnatural sequence of thought. "Say, you believe in God?"

"Sometimes, not always."

"Same here."

There was another prolonged silence; all at once Tarvey began to talk with unexpected freedom and fluency. "The Bible and that story and all started me thinking about it, I suppose, but it comes over me every once in a while that you can't ever get in such a tight place that you got to give up—or sell out, like you say. Why, lemme tell you what happened to me one time—" He paused, seemingly got a fresh start, and went on earnestly, though not looking at his companion; it was as if he were talking over the experience with himself. "It was in the war—when I was over there. I got caught in a shell-hole. I wasn't hurt, but it was hot—a lot hotter than today, and I was terrible thirsty. There was a place where I could have got a drink, but some Bush kep' sniping at me, if I showed, so I just had to lay and sizzle. After a while, I thought: 'Well, I can't hold out no longer. Why don't I just get up and let the

— Bush shoot me and be done with it! I'll die anyhow; it's as broad as it's long.' But I didn't. Because right then I got to thinking: no use making it easy for 'em—the Bushes, you know. That ain't sense. And then something come over me, like I was telling you just now, and I looked up at the sky and says: 'Say, You up there, Whoever You are, You think You got me beat, don't You? Well, You're fooling Yourself!' I says. 'Because, lookit here, You've gone to work and fixed it up for me the worst way You know, ain't You? I haven't got a chanst in a hundred of getting out of here alive, and You're giving me all I can stand. That's what You think,' says I. And then I says: 'Well, I'm standing it, ain't I? And what's more, I aim to keep on standing it, no difference what You do. Beat *me!*' says I, hollering right out: 'Forget it! *I'm* beating *You!* As long as I stand it, I got You beat. You can't fix it up for me so bad I won't stand it. I don't care Who You are or What You are, You can't beat me!' "

Cook was sitting up, a statue of attention. "Well!" he said, as the other stopped.

"Well, nothing happened," said George with a sort of laugh. "Maybe I was a little off in my head, what with the sun and all, but I recollect it plain as plain. The snipers didn't land me, and come dark, some of the boys crawled out on patrol and found me and helped me back. I never told anybody before, excep' Cleve. It sounds so dam' crazy. But I believe I had the right dope just the same."

"Other people have thought that way, too," said Cook. He quoted some sounding and fiery lines to which Tarvey listened with patience and concentration, though, needless to say, he had never cultivated a taste for verse.

“‘*I am the captain of my soul,*’” he echoed musingly. “Yeah, I guess he felt about like I did. Only I don’t see how he could set down and write it in poetry. Cleve could, though, I wouldn’t wonder.”

“You mean Harrod? Does he write poetry?”

“Sure! Yes. Didn’t you know it? Well, I wouldn’t say he just writes poetry. I guess he takes a try at everything. He don’t make a business of it, like you do—I don’t mean that. He just does it off and on.”

This piece of information scarcely surprised Cook, nor did it fetch a smile from him. In his time Marshall had come across more eccentric combinations than poetry and bar-keeping, and used to remark that in such cases it was better not to laugh too readily; there might turn out to be more of tragedy than comedy about them. Remembering his own youth, he viewed Cleve with a warmer interest; he knew what it was to “write.” He himself had toiled more years than he cared to think about at an accountant’s desk before risking his livelihood to the precarious art of letters, and believed he recognized in Cleve Harrod a disposition and experience that paralleled his own. But succeeding events dispelled this illusion, not too pleasantly. There remained but two days of their Bermuda fortnight, and this same evening as Mr. Cook strolled along the borders of Harrington Sound, in the dusk, the tip of his cigarette glowing like a tiny perambulating pharos, somebody stepped forth from the shadow of the tamarisks, and accosted him cautiously.

“Mr. Cook! Can I speak to you a minute, please? It’s only me,” the apparition explained not too clearly.

“Miss Tarvey? It *is* Miss Tarvey?” said the novelist, peering into the dark; he threw away the

cigarette, and took off his hat; and sensing by her attitude which balanced between timidity and bravado that this was no mere casual encounter, he involuntarily adopted an encouraging style. "What is it? Something I can do for you?"

"Yes—well, not for me exactly, but—would you look at this, please? Would you please take it and look at it?"

She thrust a flat, rectangular package upon him, which the author's practiced touch recognized instantly with a sinking sensation. It was manuscript. He recoiled even while automatically accepting it.

"I mean will you read it?" said Sophy trustfully.

A demand to "Stick 'em up!" which is understood to be the latter-day equivalent for the "Stand and deliver!" of Dick Turpin's era, could not have disconcerted Mr. Cook more. "My—my dear young lady—" he stuttered, mechanically trying to affix his eye-glasses. "I'm—I'm so sorry—I've no doubt your work is most interesting, but—but—I—er—"

"It's not mine—it's Cleve's," said Sophy simply. "I'd love to have you just look at it. I don't mean fix it up, you know—" she explained anxiously. "He wouldn't like that. He writes beautifully, but the—the publishing men don't know anything about him, and I thought you might just put 'em on. You know a bunch of 'em, and they'd pay attention to anything *you* told 'em. You don't need to read every word," said Sophy considerately. "Just enough so's you can see it's good. It won't take any time. You can do it *easy*, all the practice you've had reading."

"My dear young lady!" expostulated Cook again, feebly, getting himself and his hat and his eye-glass-ribbon and the manuscript into a desperate tangle. "I—I—can't really—I never—"

"Here, I'll fix that for you," said Sophy, proceeding to do so. "My, I'll hate it if I ever have to put on specs! I never knew an old person who didn't say they were a nuisance. There!"

She stepped back. It is impossible to return a package of manuscript to the hands of a young lady when she is using them to extricate the ribbon of your eye-glasses; and short of actual force, how are you to make her take it back when she is quite determined not to accept it, and moreover is getting farther away every second? Mr. Cook stood helplessly holding the fateful bundle as if it had been an infernal machine, set to go off nobody knew when. "My dear Miss Tarvey," he began for the third time, "I don't think you know—you perhaps don't realize—one must give anything of this—er—this importance very deliberate, very careful consideration. There isn't enough time—we're leaving the day after tomorrow, and—"

"You can just take it along," said Sophy, unmoved. "You'll have to have it anyhow to show the New York men. It's all right; Cleve won't miss it. He's likely got copies of it anyhow; I know he writes things over and over again."

"*'Won't miss it?'*" repeated the author. "Doesn't he know? You're not bringing me this without his knowing?"

There was the briefest possible pause, infinitesimal, not the duration of a breath. "Sure! Sure he knows!" said Sophy. "Of course he knows!" Another speck of a pause, and she went on gathering momentum visibly: "Yes, indeedy! Only he's so proud and offish, he wouldn't speak to you himself; but he let *me*. He said *I* could. I told him I'd take a dare as quick as anybody. He didn't think I'd have the nerve, you know; but I says: 'Gee, I'm

not scared of Mr. Cook!' No harm *asking*, anyhow. Oh sure, yes, Cleve knows."

She was fibbing, and Cook knew she was fibbing; but, as he afterwards said, what was he to do? No one could be brutal to a little thing like Sophy.

CHAPTER VIII

ALL this time, while the Cook couple tried to look away, and Miriam and Sophy rebelliously looked on, after the manner of their several kinds, Mrs. Edith Gherardi continued to experiment with her own sensations critically and suspiciously. She was no coquette—no “vamp” as she herself would have said; she had too good a sense of humor. The sinuous ladies of stage and moving picture society, of fiction, of real life—if any such exist in real life—with their languishing, their courtesan tricks, Edith thought vulgar and funny and excessively stupid; if it had been worth her while to make a fool of a man, she would not have gone about it with their hackneyed banalities. Setting apart tastes, she was not physically equipped for the rôle of *Thais*, as with her capacity for merciless evaluation, she was thoroughly aware. She could look in the glass at her angular shape, her sharp features and indeterminate coloring, and laugh at the notion of employing fleshly wiles to attract or subdue. As Edith Rudd, she had had suitors enough, men to whom—let it be believed since even society said so!—her dollars were no bait; perhaps she could have them now, but Edith was tired, bored, indifferent. “I’ve seen the whole show,” she would say, thinking, it may be, of the ugly marital romance which had held the stage for one act.

Yet here she was in Bermuda, being made love to by a barkeeper! She found herself diverted against her will, impatient, saddened and vexed in the same

breath; the main trouble, as she coolly analyzed it, was that the young man had no business to be a bar-keeper; it was ridiculous and abominable that he should be a bar-keeper; what ailed him that he accepted the condition so supinely? "If I were in his place——!" Edith said to herself with a flare of scorn. If the doctrine of heredity goes for anything, she would have bettered any obstacle, any handicap. Her grandfather, old David Rudd, began life a poor country boy, like a good many American grandfathers, and like a good many American grandfathers, he set his aim high, at not less than a million probably, and never allowed anything, not even a conscientious scruple, to get in his way; he was a hard man, reaping where he had not sowed, and taking up what he had not laid down, yet on the whole, like his contemporaries, a strong prop to this republic; valuable, perhaps necessary. His harsh, shrewd, obdurate face was preserved amongst the other family canvases in the Rudd dining room; there were moments when Mrs. Gherardi strikingly resembled it, as now for example while she revolved the case of Cleve Harrod. Ancestral astuteness, enhanced by considerable worldly wisdom and experience, advised her that the affair could not go on much longer; the young man was bound to do something foolish; and though Bermuda was a thousand miles from home (thank Heaven!), though not a soul in the place would ever by the remotest chance fall in familiarly with any member of her class here or anywhere else, though Mr. and Mrs. Cook would be discreet for their own sakes, still things do leak out and get into wide circulation—that is, discreditable things. No one is ever at the pains to repeat a harmless or amiable story; one of folly and wrong-doing is so much more certain to entertain. Mrs.

Edith had no idea of providing her enemies—and friends—with that particular species of entertainment; she meditated, pulling Poilu's silky ears; then at last got up, tumbled the dog off her lap, and began to dress for the afternoon walk, still debating some course, with an occasional sharp smile.

There was an overcast sky, with a storm on the way, which residents of the island acclaimed gleefully. Mr. Cook said they ought to amend the liturgy to read: "*Give us this season our five feet of water*"; the thought of it was never far from their minds, and fear of drought and fireworms sat down before every onion farmer like a beleaguering army. The rains, they said, seldom came on with the hasty temper of the tropics; there were no simooms, water-spouts and cloudbursts, only a mild, steady and dependable downpour. It looked as if it might begin any moment as Edith stepped from the hotel porch.

"Better take an umbrella," said Mrs. Beales benevolently; "you're going to get caught, sure."

"Oh, this won't hurt." The Beales mother and daughter looked after her wondering, Miriam perhaps a trifle bitterly, what must be the resources of a woman who could afford to risk spoiling so perfect an outfit. It was one of the mastic-cloth confections for which Mrs. Gherardi had a fancy, wrinkling closely to her straight, slender figure, touched here and there with patterns of needlework done in bright yarns, orange, blue and green, picked out with black; there was a hat that matched, a coat lined with crepe; the odd, semi-rough, reticulated material assumed incomparable modishness under this treatment by some Parisian artist in women's gear. "But I wouldn't look like anything in it—and Soph wouldn't," Miriam thought. "Oh, well, give us the money—!"

Mrs. Gherardi turned the corner of the forecourt, and took a path at random leading up the hill back of the St. Leon. She had not been this way before, and ere long found herself in a maze of small yards and cabins, forcibly recalling the settlements of the colored population dotted over her native city—indeed, over every city of the Middle West near the viewless border line where North and South touch. They invariably bear some such title, colloquially, as “the burg” or “Darktown;” nobody knows or can remember when they came into being, but who has not seen their sway-backed roofs, their lean-tos and makeshift porches, their decrepit fences enclosing ragged parcels of ground where the tailings from every garret and junkshop in the community seem to be assembled? Here in this British island was the replica of any Darktown of Ohio. There were even the narrow, hard trodden, aimlessly meandering paths crossing and re-crossing among the high weeds, giving the whole a strange and subtly disquieting character of the jungle as if Africa were unforgotten and evilly potent still, under all this innocent and peaceful disorder. But for the oleanders growing wild, and the distant segments of sea, Edith could have believed herself at home, on the hunt for a laundress in a “colored neighborhood” which might not be too safe after dark, though respectable as “colored neighborhoods” go, by day. She followed the paths upward, past lines strung with washes, past chicken coops, tethered goats, isolated groups of potato plants, cats basking on the low coral-tile roofs, arbors of hybiscus, tumbledown sheds housing tumbledown wagons or farming tools, until she had traversed the entire settlement, and stood above it. There was a sparse growth of trees, pines and others she could not identify, over the

summit of the hill, in the middle of them some redoubt-like erection, intriguing to the view. A grave little colored boy came daundering along the path and Edith applied to him.

“What’s that big thing up there?”

It appeared it was the cistern.

“Oh, for the hotel?”

Yes’m, it was for the hotel; also yes’m, he went to school; and he was nine years old. Mrs. Gherardi, feeling that the ceremonies were not quite complete, after these questions and answers, groped in her embroidered pockets. “What’s your name, pickaninny?”

“My name is Cyril Douglas Maitland,” said the youngster, in English of much more precise accent than her own. To American ears, the effect was indescribably unnatural; Mrs. Gherardi, after one startled instant, began to laugh, and was startled again to hear the laugh echoed behind her. She turned alertly.

“Oh, Mr. Harrod! I didn’t know——”

“I’m going to take a look at the rain-shed,” said Cleve.

“Yes! Is that it? The boy was telling me. Thank you so much, Cyril Douglas Maitland.”

He accepted the tip and daundered on with unimpaired dignity; Edith and Cleve looked at each other and laughed again.

“I can’t get used to their speaking *English* English. They look exactly like our darkies, and one expects the darky dialect.”

“Yes, I do still, after living here months.”

He joined her without leave or question and they made their way through the undergrowth and spidery entanglements of grass towards the redoubt. It was a circle of concrete wall, standing some five feet

above ground, the top a huge, shallow, metal pan, sloping from all sides to the middle; the water-collecting area was increased by a sort of crescent of actual sheds, stretches of corrugated iron roofing raised on posts somewhat higher than the reservoir, and tilted to discharge into it. Edith climbed on a low buttress, and inspected the tank and its appendages curiously.

"I suppose you have to come up and examine it every now and then, like today, to see that it's not leaking."

"Yes," said Cleve, readily. He had visited the rain-shed barely once, and had never examined it or intended to—alas for honesty!

The truth was, for the last two weeks, Mr. Cleveland Harrod had been living in a fool's paradise illuminated by the pale green-gray eyes, the inexplicably compelling personality of Mrs. Edith Gherardi. Who ever loved that loved not at first sight? Very likely the young gentleman had weathered through more than one amorous experience before; but those were in his green and callow boyhood, he would have told himself impatiently if he had stopped to remember them at all, whereas this—! This was real. He was a man and knew what he wanted. What though she were older than himself? She was still young, she would always be young, like the nymph of the Greek urn, fair, cool, utterly desirable. That she had suffered wrongs filled him with chivalrous indignation; that she had undoubtedly retaliated upon her persecutors in no saint-like spirit not awaiting the Lord's vengeance, but deliberately and relentlessly taking her own, only stirred him to a livelier admiration. Just so would he have her, brave, proud, implacable! To her fortune and family and station, Cleve characteristically never

gave a thought; he did indeed recall vaguely that there were some very rich and socially prominent Rudds at home, but the connection did not interest him. Pauper or princess, it was Edith Gherardi he was in love with, and the only question now tormenting him was: did she—? It made his face flame to fill out that blank even alone, in the darkness and quiet of his room at night. As if she could—? He swore savagely at himself for a presuming fool; and for, a strange thing, Cleve did know somewhere in some obscure corner of his brain that he *was* a fool. There were fugitive moments when some inner self stood by observing and taking notes of all his raptures, his disappointments, his mad hopes, the eating suspense, the exquisite, blissful pain; but Cleve could and did turn away this unwelcome investigating and tabulating personage, and lock the door on him. He suspected him of being the Cleve Harrod that wanted to “write” and his presence profaned the temple.

For with dreams of Edith forever distracting him, Cleve could not compass any sort of work or study. To be sure, he would build castles in the air by the hour wherein they dwelt together, she the brilliant chatelaine, he the renowned artist and man of letters Cleveland Harrod; Broadway theatres, London and New York book shops, the foremost periodicals, editors, publishers, producing managers, hazily filled up the background. The modest figures of Work and Drudgery had no place there; while Cleve was indulging in these splendid visions, he was actually doing nothing at all. For an excuse, it may be offered that his goddess somehow did not inspire literary effort, contrary to accepted beliefs; the most ardent poet and lover that ever drew breath would not have attempted a sonnet to Mrs. Gherardi’s

eyebrows. Something about her discomfited the muse.

He stood by during her survey of the reservoir, offering a hand that trembled a little at the contact, to help her down. The rising wind brought a mist of rain, filling the air like cool steam; it did not patter, it permeated.

"Three rousing cheers! Now we'll all get our tub just as usual!" said Edith, looking up at the heavy sky.

"We'll get it before we want it. It'll be coming down steadily in a minute. Look!"

There was fog moving in from the sea, and a wet chill; the water looked grey and dense like the sky, and at this distance strangely inactive though they knew it must be running with rising violence on the reefs. Without commotion the clouds seemed all at once to liquify. There was no storm, though the wind sped amongst the trees in wet gusts; one could fancy it rattling the windows in their casings down below at the St. Leon, and out at sea it might be very loud and formidable in the rigging. Casual outcry arose from the settlement down the hill-side, children being called in, goats bleating protests, men hallooing one to another; the sounds carried on the rain-filled air with eerie distinctness. A pair of gulls wheeled and squeaked overhead.

"Here, we've got to get somewhere out of this. You'll be drenched. Can't I spread my coat——?"

"No, no, don't take it off. Why can't we go right in here?"

They took shelter under the sheds, among the supporting posts, laughing like two children. Cleve had to go bent, ducking his head, and there were places too low even for Edith; both were above the average height. He found a log and rolled it against

one of the wooden supports to make a seat for her, himself stretching out on one elbow at her feet. The brown ground was dry hereabouts, matted with webs of grass.

"It's funny to think they call that stuff worse than any weed at home and root it out of all the lawns and links," Edith said.

"All the turf they've got here."

They could hear the rain rustling down the channels of the roofs; a tenuous veil of moisture curtained them round; they seemed on a sudden ineffably remote and cut off from all the world in a solitude that palpitated with lawless emotions. Cleve stirred, touching her; he gave a quivering sigh. "Oh, Edith——!"

For one white-hot instant, Edith felt herself yield; all her senses answered to him avidly and urgently. But it was only for an instant. In a lightning-stroke of ugly revelation, she thought: "Why, *this* is what has been the matter with me all along! I might have known—— Faugh! I *did* know!" Her strong, clean spirit revolted not at the spectacle of the young man's passion, but to behold, unmasked, her own; it was nauseating, and worse by far, it was wretchedly weak. She saw herself level with the lewd, vacant-headed simpletons of the slums and police-courts—even, it may be of certain circles that impinged upon hers; the most ancient of trades is plied in places high and low. As if for excitement, she, Edith Rudd, must resort to such devices!

"Edith!" murmured Cleve again, beseechingly.

"Don't do that!" she commanded, turning a cold and steady gaze upon him. She did not stir an inch, she scarcely moved a muscle; leave squawkings and struggles to servant-girls! But, since it is impossible to embrace a statue, Cleve lingeringly desisted.

In spite of himself, she dominated him; yet he began a violent avowal and entreaty.

"Oh, you *love* me!" said Edith, composedly, stressing the verb with a kind of sardonic lightness. "And what shall I do with your love?"

"I adore you—it was from the first—the very first night. You came into the room—I love you—and you've let me, Edith. Yes, you let me—you *knew*—you—"

"Why yes, I knew," said Mrs. Gherardi. "But as to letting you, there didn't seem to be any stopping you. I had to wait until you committed some idiocy like this. As to myself, I don't remember to have behaved in any other way than I always do."

Cleve, from his suppliant's position, looked at her baffled, bewildered, tormented. He felt that she was evading him; and yet it was true that in all their association, she had never been other than mistress of herself, as at this moment. "You encouraged me," he said sullenly.

"*A la bonne heure!* I encouraged you, did I? Let us hear how? But perhaps, first of all, we had better hear why? Why should I encourage you?" asked Mrs. Gherardi. She reiterated her first question with a shrug: "What do you think I would want with your love? What would I do with it and you?"

"Amuse yourself, I suppose," said the young man, fiercely. He caught her again in a furious embrace. "You can't play that way with me! I'll teach you—I'll—" Suddenly all his anger dissolved in longing, at the feel of her slender, supple body in his arms. "I love you, I love you—" he whispered in a strangled voice, with his lips against her hair. "Edith, please—!"

"I told you not to do that," said Edith, rigid as before, cold and unafraid. Cleve's arms fell from

her against his will. "I can't help your loving me—but don't bore me!" said Edith, rearranging herself with what seemed an almost hideously unnatural calm to the young man whose own senses were in shattering turmoil. "I really have liked you very much," said Mrs. Gherardi. "You interested me. But as to loving—that's all dead and gone—finished—out of my life. *Love you—!*" She made a slighting gesture. "Why, you don't amount to anything. You ought to know by this time that I would never fall in love with anybody but a man."

Cleve was speechless, the dark color slowly rising in his face.

"I made a mistake once—I was a girl and didn't know as much as I do now," said Edith, utterly unmoved to all appearances by the sight of his wrath and mortification. "I am not likely ever to make that mistake again. Since then, I've met and known real men—my own father is one—and I measure other men up to them. I ask you again what on earth should I do with you and your love? You're nothing but an idle, visionary boy, keeping a bar—,"

"If you think—" Cleve choked out; "if you suppose—"

"I don't think or suppose anything, except that if there were anything in you, you wouldn't be dawdling around here, contented with making a bare living, as long as you have time to write, and to fancy yourself in love with me," said David Rudd's granddaughter, looking remarkably like that old worthy as she spoke. As Cleve stammeringly began some retort, she stopped him with an imperious movement of her hand—her thin, long-fingered hand that was as expressive of spirit and character as the rest of her. Cleve had often dreamed of its ca-

resses; he was not dreaming now, poor wretch! He would have given his own hand to be able to hate her; he told himself that he did hate her.

"Don't get any silly notion that I think you beneath notice as a lover because of your position here," said Edith Gherardi. "What's that to me, what you do? If I loved a man, he might scrub gutters—but he'd have to be a man. Go *be* somebody and *do* something! Before I'd stay here, and pour out drinks, and teach a parcel of giggling women how to swim, and ride a bicycle in town to buy a roast or find out why the butter hadn't been sent, and hang around to oblige somebody with a game of pool—before I'd spend my days that way, I'd dive off the cliff into deep water and be done with it!"

All of this caustic oration she delivered without raising her voice—which was exceedingly pleasant, distinct and well-placed—or giving any other indication of excitement; it impressed the more by reason of her impersonal tranquillity. Cleve felt as if every word sank into him like a drop of molten lead. There was a prolonged silence, and then Mrs. Gherardi said in her even and governed manner, as if they had been talking about the weather for this half hour, "I believe we'd better make a dash for the hotel, don't you? The rain seems to be holding off a little."

CHAPTER IX

MR. COOK set himself to reading the manuscript which Sophy Tarvey—as he crisply remarked in the vernacular—had “wished on” him, in a frame of mind by no means becoming to a critic, or to the guide, philosopher and friend whose good offices she solicited. Marshall stubbornly believed that the Lord helps those who help themselves; the creed rested on his personal experience, than which there can hardly be a more stable and solid foundation. The art of letters, according to him, was to be neither learned nor taught of others; a writer was at once the only pupil and the only master in his school. His must be the spirit that mulishly prefers to fail in its own way, rather than succeed in another’s way, that will not heed advice, and never dreams of asking assistance. “Everybody that does anything worth while, does it alone,” he would say; and the rebuffs which he must occasionally administer to literary aspirants, were in general humane and patient sermons on that text. Now he disposed himself inelegantly with his feet elevated on the window-sill, lit a cigarette, drew a chair to one side to accommodate the papers, scowled, sighed and went to work. Mrs. Cook, entering, uttered bird-twitterings of surprise.

“Where did all that come from, Marshall? Is it those Satterlee and Clough publishing people? I should think they might let you have your vacation.”

"This is another disturber of the peace," said Cook. He gave her some account of what had befallen. "I rather suspect our little friend Miss Tarvey of acting on her own hook; young Harrod may not have had anything to do with it—and then again, he may! He looks as if he knew better—but I wouldn't put it past him, or any of them," he said, grimly.

Mrs. Cook observed that he might have gotten out of it.

"Well, no—as it happened—I really couldn't. You feel so sorry—the girl has a small, serviceable brain that will take her just so far. One feels so sorry. People like that have so little in their lives. I—I couldn't help it," Mr. Cook explained, not too lucidly. "She was so feminine and pitiful."

"Oh, *feminine*?" said the lady, drily. "Imagine Edith Rudd doing a thing like that! Or me!"

"Well, you and Edith, of course—why are women so merciless to one another?"

Mrs. Bessie's rejoinder was masterly; she went into their bedroom and rang for Celeste.

There was packing to be superintended, a lengthy business; but two hours later when she returned, Marshall was still reading. The distribution of the typewritten sheets in piles suggested that he might even be re-reading; he did not immediately look up when his wife spoke.

"Edith's just come in, wet through and through. She probably won't catch cold, though; she's a perfect pine knot, and never has anything the matter with her. Haven't you finished yet? You surely aren't going to read it *all*?"

Cook laid down the sheet in his hand, looking at her with an odd, half-dazed expression. "Bessie," he said, ponderously, "it's incredible, but it's *so*!"

He can write. The boy can write. Isn't there another box of matches?"

"Really, can he?" said Mrs. Cook, negligently. "There're some matches on the dressing-table. You've got yourself all over ashes as usual."

"He can write," repeated the eminent novelist, like a man under psychic influence in a trance; he helped himself to the matches and another cigarette in the same blank and mechanical style.

"Third time!" said his wife, laughing. "Well, suppose he can? What of it?"

"What of it? Why, I don't know—I never was more astonished in my life. The young fellow has a charming fancy, a real gift. I tell you I wouldn't have believed it," Cook said with energy. Bessie was astonished, in her turn, to see him get up and walk about the room gesticulating; she had never known him to be so enthusiastically excited.

"Why, Marshall! You don't get into this state over your own work. Is Mr. Harrod so wonderful?"

"Oh, *wonderful!*" said the author, impatiently. "No, he isn't *wonderful*. Nobody is, except to school-girls. No, he just has talent—well, perhaps I don't mean that either," Cook amended, subsiding into his normal sedately humorous manner. "There is no talent, there is nothing but hard work. Well, young Harrod has found that out. That's the unexpected, the meritorious thing. He can write. It's *real writing.*" He sat down with his hands on his knees, surveying her with a great deal of vivacity in his eye-glassed gaze.

"*'He can write'*—fourth time! Hallelujah!" said Bessie, frivolously. "What's it like? His writing, I mean?"

"Eh? Oh, two or three short stories—little plays

—there's a masque, too—it's all in a finished, dainty, romantic style——”

“*Dainty and romantic?* That six-footer with fists like a ham!” shrieked Mrs. Cook; she fell back, lost in mirth. Cook himself had to smile.

“You'd expect something '*red-blooded*' and '*gripping*' and '*virile*' and all the rest of it, wouldn't you? I did,” he frankly owned. “Nothing of the sort! And absolutely decent, all of it. He's not prudish, not mealy-mouthed—he calls a spade a spade if need arises; but there's none of that abhorrent sickly-sexual stuff. It's gay, fantastic, touching, absurd; he's as gentlemanly as Prince Hal and as full of fun. There's a set of *Woodland Scenes*, he calls them—here, wait a minute, I'll read you——”

“Read!” ejaculated his wife in an amazement bordering on alarm; in all their acquaintance, in all their married life, Marshall had never volunteered to read her anything. He did not hear her as he rummaged feverishly among the manuscripts.

“In this one, a company of moving-picture people go out in the country ‘on location’ to make some moonlight films. It's St. John's Eve, Midsummer, you know, and they fall in with a company of fairies—Shakespeare's fairies. It's extraordinarily pretty. He's written some Elizabethan songs for it. Here, this is the *Night-Song*.” Mr. Cook read with great gusto:

“*Now the round-fac'd owl doth watch,*
Now the leatherne bat awakes.
Now clapt up is every latch,
Honest Hodge his rest he takes.
Now the whisker'd, nibbling mouse,
Prying, squeaks about the house.

*And hearths grow chill
 And crickets still
 And fairies dance in a ring!
 Now the glow-worm lights his link,
 Steal thy steps the spotted fawn.
 Puck and Robin sweat and swink,
 Tasks to finish ere the dawn.
 Patch'd with moonlight is the grass
 Lovers play there, lad and lass.
 Stars speck the pool,
 And brooks run cool,
 And fairies dance in a ring!"*

Bessie listened with all respect. "Yes, that is pretty," she said, as he paused, looking towards her for an opinion. "That's all of that one? But you have another there? Read it."

Cook cocked an eye at her quizzically. He quoted Christopher Sly, that prince of Shakespearian tinkers: "'T is a good matter—would 'twere done!" and obediently went on:

*"Morning-Song.
 Wake! The black-a-visèd night,
 Yawning, stealeth from the light.
 The thrifty cock, his hens among,
 Thrice his matinverse hath sung.
 See the toiling spider's tent
 Propp'd on grasses, dew-besprent.
 Wake! The russet furrow now
 Patient waits the patient plow.
 Sober-hooded mists give way,
 Upward strides the jolly day!"*

"I can see what it is that you like about them," said Mrs. Marshall, after a moment. "Of course,

I know don't anything about the study, or taste or originality or whatever it is that one must have to write them——”

“The thing is that they are in true sixteenth-century vein,” said the little man. “They fulfill the requirements of Elizabethan lyric poetry, that is: they are good verse that can be sung.”

Mrs. Cook smiled dubiously. “They couldn’t be sung on Broadway, Marshall—not more than once, at any rate!”

“I know,” said Cook, nodding; “The Broadway lyric is in a more elevated style.” He improvised a sing-song:

*“Oh, banana-land
Is mañana land
Under the Hawaiian, (Cuban, Philip-
pine or Porto-Rican) moon.
I’ll meet you soon
My señorita
Juanita
If there’s a sweeter
You’ll have to SHOW me!*

“The last line is the title of the song: ‘*You’ll have to show me!*’” Mr. Cook added in explanation. “But that’s what I call a lyric! Miss Tarvey would call it one, anyway.”

“Do you suppose she can possibly have read these things of Mr. Harrod’s?”

“She?” cried out Cook. “Good Lord, no! The poor little creature just said he ‘wrote beautifully’ because she wanted to get me interested, because she——”

“Oh, never mind! As if I didn’t *know!*” said his wife, almost sharply.

The *Fort Victoria*, on the southbound lap of her final trip for that season, went swimming by Harrington Sound outlet Friday morning; actually far out at sea, she seemed to pass within a stone's throw of the two low capes that framed the view. It was a fine, clear, breezy day after the rain, and the ship made a brave picture as do all ships with their vitality of look and gallant movement, their power to stir the imagination; but not for those aesthetic reasons did sundry personages, transient residents of Bermuda, the Hotel St. Leon and its environs welcome the arrival. Mrs. Marshall Cook, for one, confessed freely that she would be glad to get home, she "*had had enough of it*"—and whether she meant by that the fatigues of travel, the island life, or certain unexpected anxieties, who knows? Her husband reported himself ready to return to work; the holiday had lasted out his desire. Mrs. Gherardi restlessly remarked that she must hunt up some new place to go for the summer, some place where she had never been—Honolulu, perhaps; the So-and-Sos had spoken to her about going with them to Honolulu. It may be believed that one, at least, of her audience heard the announcement without objection, to wit: Miss Miriam Beales. Let Mrs. Gherardi go wherever she chose, so Miriam did not have to encounter her again! Honolulu was none too far, the young lady thought acidly—while guarding her civil, serene, obliging air of the well-schooled hotel-clerk! Miss Sophy Tarvey may have shared the feeling though neither girl hinted it to the other. Without any estrangement they had ceased to be so confidential as at first; and Mrs. Gherardi's name—Cleve Harrod's, too, for that matter—seldom figured in their conversation nowadays.

The Beales themselves would be packing up in another week or so; all the hotel world was in motion. George was to go; he had given "good satisfaction," Mr. Beales said, and they had come to terms for the Roscoe Lake season.

"I struck Lester N. for a raise," Tarvey informed his friend, not in excuse or defense or even argument, but as one who is thrice-armed in justice and reasonableness. "It costs a whole lot more to live in the States, and I got to take Soph wherever I go. He saw the point and didn't make any kick except he didn't want to give but just so much; well, I wouldn't *take* but just so much, so we dickered a while and ended up by splitting the difference. That's fair enough. If itta been just myself, I don't know that I'd have held out, because I like Beales, and then I've learned considerable in my business since I been in Bermuda, and seems as if that ought to count somehow. But you know it's Soph," said George gravely, "I got to think about her."

"She's ever so much better," said Cleve.

"Oh, she's *well!* She's all *right*; there ain't a thing out o' whack," said the brother with his usual vehement insistence when Sophy's health came to be discussed. "Only—anyway, doc. says the Adirondacks will be fine for her," he added inconsistently enough. "I—I—kinda didn't like the way he said it, Cleve," George admitted uncomfortably. "He says: 'Why, sure, the Adirondacks is all right. They send lungers there right along, and some of 'em get well.' It kinda upset me."

"Oh, doctors' talk! I wouldn't pay any attention to it," said Cleve vigorously, as much to reassure himself as the other. "He didn't tell Sophy that, did he?"

"No, nor of course I didn't. There ain't anything the matter with her now, anyhow. But I wanna fix it so the kid'll have the right stuff to eat, like real milk, you know—not this condensed that we got down here, and sleep outdoors on one of those porches, and—and maybe see another doc.," said George. "It all costs money, y' know, so that's why I struck Beales. Everything's twice as high in the States."

This conversation took place as they were sitting on the lobster-tank. It was a sizable wooden coffer, sunk in the ground, with a lid of loose planks, raised on a sort of curbing; looking down between the cracks one might behold the prisoners in their watery cell, and through a smaller, subordinate lid, they might be dipped out in a landing-net—an operation which George now skilfully performed. "First time I tried it, a big bull lobster nipped me, and Gee, it *hurt!*!" he said reminiscently. "I got so now, though, I could handle 'em with my eyes shut. Funny the things you learn going round places. They don't have 'em—lobsters—up at Roscoe Lake; but there'll be somepin' else new, I guess—there always is. Maybe I'll never see Bermuda again; a person can't ever tell." They set off to the house. "Wish you were coming with us, Cleve," George said.

"I'm going to get something else to do," said Cleve, hues of mahogany creeping to the roots of his hair.

What this "something else" would be, the young gentleman had no idea; he had weathered through the worst night of his life, and this morning would have given worlds either to see Mrs. Gherardi or not to see her, he did not know which. Into the midst of his resentment, his humiliation, his sense

of outrage, there elbowed a suspicion that there was at least a grain of truth in her scorching arraignment, and he wanted violently to disprove it. *Be somebody and do something, forsooth!* He would show her! The difficulty was that only by acting on that distasteful advice, could he show her. But some day, by —! By something quite unmentionable, dreadful to report. In the meanwhile Bermuda was a prison, a gehenna, with her or without her, and as to Roscoe Lake, the prospect of another hotel season, erstwhile sufficiently attractive, had become insupportable. He would go back to New York, storm the publishers' and theatrical producers' offices, starve, sleep on a park bench. Go *do something* and *be somebody!* A dozen retorts that he might have made, instead of standing tongue-tied with anger like a dolt, came to him too late; perhaps it was as well, he thought with irony. Of what advantage to answer a shrew shrewishly? Let her put herself in the wrong—though, unfortunately for this argument, Mrs. Gherardi had somehow contrived not to put herself in the wrong. Nor was she in the least a shrew; throughout that hideous interview she had remained mistress of herself, the same disturbing combination of Diana and great lady as always, provoking his passion even while she insulted it.

He had not seen her yet today; but now as the two young men sauntered through the hotel yard, there was a glimpse of pale color on the verandah, a sweeping black hat; and Poilu's small, incisive bark reached them. Cleve stopped short.

“Well, s'long!” said George, prudently manipulating the landing-net. “The salad-oil's getting low, Cleve, I don't know whether it'll reach. You might tell Lester N.” He went on towards the

kitchen entrance, uttering a brief “ ‘Lo!’ ” as Mr. Cook came strolling along.

“Hello!” responded the latter, and to Cleve he said with an odd hesitating vivacity. “Oh, good morning, I—er—I wanted to see you. I’ve been waiting to see you, in fact.”

“I know,” said Cleve, unreasonably including the little novelist and Lester N. and himself and the world at large in the capacious hatred he felt for Mrs. Gherardi, and would always feel—provided, that is, he could stay in the same mind about her for two minutes together. “The livery-bill. I have it all made out.”

Mr. Cook astonishingly consigned the livery bill to a locality which several eminent spiritual authorities have assured us does not exist! “I wasn’t thinking about *that*,” he said; and again in perceptible embarrassment: “I—ah—I want to see you about this—these things you have done—your—um—work, you know—?”

“Hey!” Cleve ejaculated, confounded.

“Yes—what you let me have to read, you know—?”

“I let you have to read—?” echoed Cleve, parrot-wise.

“Yes, the manuscript Miss Sophy was so kind as to bring me,” explained the novelist rapidly, not looking at him. “What you—er—you entrusted to her for me, you remember—?”

“Sophy?”

“*Woodland Scenes* and some others. You remember,” Cook informed him, placidly, regaining his own balance, in the satisfaction of having guessed aright about Sophy Tarvey’s manoeuvres. The young fellow’s surprise was genuine, Marshall was convinced; it would take a histrionic talent con-

spicuously above the average to counterfeit such blankness.

"She gave you—she took you the manuscript of *Woodland Scenes* to read? Sophy showed it to you, Mr. Cook? She said I—I mean I—?" Cleve lapsed into silence; after an instant, he gathered himself together with an effort. "Yes, I remember, of course. I—I gave Miss Tarvey the—the stuff to show you—yes, certainly. I remember," said he, lying valiantly. "I—thought you—I—"

"She asked me to read it," Cook briskly interposed, to help him out.

"I'm very much obliged to you," said Cleve stiffly, after another silence.

"That's all right," said the little man, awkwardly. "I have it upstairs now—I would like to talk to you about it, if you will—if you have time to come now—?"

"You're very kind, Mr. Cook, but I feel as if I were enough in your debt already. It was an imposition—I mean I realize now that I imposed on you," Cleve corrected himself in haste. "I—I don't want you to feel—"

"Lord, man, come along!" said Marshall impatiently. "I'm in earnest, can't you *see*?"

They went upstairs.

Saturday arrived, and the St. Leon's guests came down to breakfast arrayed for travel, Mrs. Gherardi with her inalienable distinction, Mrs. Cook in the equally appropriate but more rococo style she affected, Celeste beaming—beaming decorously, that is, as becomes a lady's maid. "A very little more and she will burst into song!" Mrs. Marshall reported. "I believe even the prospect of the Gulf Stream appears to her a happy contrast to Bermuda. Nothing here for maids, whatever there may be for

barkeepers and poets and so forth," she finished mischievously.

Cook, however, took the teasing more seriously than was his wont. "Do be careful. Somebody might hear you," he said, glancing around the lobby.

"Why, everybody knows—I mean Edith knows about your young friend's literary endeavors."

"She does!"

"Oh, yes. She didn't seem at all surprised when I told her you were interested in him, just said: 'Indeed! That's very nice for Mr. Harrod,' or something like that."

Cook fixed his glasses and stared at his wife solemnly; he seemed on the verge of some speech, but checked himself—luckily perhaps, for Edith came up to them in a moment. Those eye-glasses, Mrs. Cook used to say, were Marshal's "scenery"; without them, she asserted, he could not get through a conversation; in delicate crises when he did not know what to say, or must balance between two effects, they furnished a diversion and a means of gaining time for that second thought which is always best.

The Bermudan Victorias were waiting at the front steps; Cook cleared his pockets of English money in largesse to the colored people. Mr. and Mrs. Beales and Miss Beales assembled to speed the parting guests. Good-bye, and didn't they think they might come down again next winter? Mrs. Cook graciously could not say so far ahead, but they had had a beautiful time.

"We think Roscoe Lake's a pretty nice place," Lester N. said. "Always cool up there, sleep under a blanket when the rest of the country's at ninety in the shade. Well, Mr. Cook, I'm glad to have made your acquaintance. Every now and then we

have some celebrity here; we've had Annette Kellermann, too, you know; and there's Mrs. Burnett—you've seen her house? They all seem to like us pretty well, and we certainly enjoy *them*. Oh, you want to say good-bye to Cleve, don't you? Just a minute—he's somewhere—”

Cleve must perforce go through the ceremony; he came in, shook hands with Mrs. Cook, with Mr. Cook in his diffident way; and Mrs. Gherardi, uttering some perfunctory civility, gave him her hand which the young man touched and let go of, in silence, paling slightly under his tan. No one saw the little passage in the general movement of travellers and baggage. The carriages drove up, turned, drove off; it was all over in a minute, and even the sound of the wheels died away.

There was one person who made not the least effort to be on hand for the farewells, though more than satisfied to see the backs of every member of the party, with the possible exception of Cook. Sophy had been on pins and needles for the last two days, at once frightened by her exploit and proud of it. She heard not a word from Cook, she saw nothing of Cleve, and racked herself with questions, not knowing what inference to draw. In turn she suspected Mr. Cook of not having read the manuscript, of having read it and found it “punk,” of having read it and found it so good he was jealous and meant to appropriate it, carry it off and call it his own, of having told Cleve, of not having told him. In her calmer moments she dismissed the idea of theft, not in reliance on Mr. Cook's integrity, but because the crime could be so easily proved; she had taken care to let him know that Cleve possessed duplicates. He wouldn't *dare*, in the face of *that*, Sophy thought complacently. But, according to her

simple logic, if Cook's verdict was "punk" Cleve would be angry with her; if "good" he could not help but be pleased. Suspicion that in either case he was too much occupied with Mrs. Gherardi to care what she, Sophy Tarvey, did, gnawed at her. Of course she was not jealous of Mrs. Gherardi; no reason why she should be. Mrs. Gherardi was old enough to be her mother—well, *nearly* old enough; dressing and acting in that *young* style, she could deceive any man—men are such fools! But what if Cleve Harrod *was* crazy about her? As if Sophy cared who he was crazy about! Sophy was just a good friend of his, and wanted to help him along, especially since he was so funny and queer about his writing, and didn't seem to know how to help himself. Men *are* such fools!

From her post at Mrs. Clapp's counter, she witnessed the passing of the carriages for Hamilton; it was a definite comfort to know that the Cook party was gone at last; out of sight, out of mind! Sophy inwardly rehearsed possible opening speeches for the scene with Cleve when he came, as he surely must before long. "*Hello, stranger!*" or "*Look, who's here!*" or "*My, you've lost your way, haven't you?*" She rang the changes, alternately favoring and rejecting; she did not want to say anything that might appear too *pointed*. There was ample time for consideration, for the day dragged along, and Cleve, who could not be burdened with duties now that the St. Leon was practically empty, did not come. Trade was dull with Mrs. Clapp as elsewhere on the island; they needed only two freezers of cream, and there was not a customer in the bicycle depot the whole afternoon. Sophy waited on some half-dozen urchins, sold a pipe to a stray sailor from one of the ships in the basin at St. George,

sorted her photographs for the twentieth time. The enterprise had not been particularly profitable, still she meant to continue in it at Roscoe Lake; there might not be any Mrs. Clapps up there, and she must do something. The evening found her in doubt whether to go to the hotel which, even on the excuse of seeing Miriam, might look too "pointed" or to stay frigidly aloof—which might also look too "pointed." In the end she compromised on what was literally a half-way course—half-way to the St. Leon, at the bower of tamarisks where she had ambushed Mr. Cook the other night.

What Cleve had been doing all these twenty-four hours, he himself could scarcely have told; Cook's talk, his kind offers, his humorous warnings, filled the young man with a sober elation. In the older he met the first understanding spirit of his career; for Cook had understood somehow, Cleve said to himself, before he knew Cleve to be anything but a hotel factotum, a barkeeper if you choose. There never was the least hint of patronage or condescension about the little novelist's good fellowship, nor was there now. Not for an instant did he put Cleve into the position of his protégé-elect. "They'll inevitably label you my 'discovery,'" he said in good-humoured prophecy. "Well, let 'em! Man does not live by bread alone, but by catchwords, Stevenson said. It's a cut-and-dried idea that everybody must be 'discovered'; whereas the truth is that everybody worth discovering comes to the surface of himself, often by very slow degrees."

"Still I can't help thinking that I'm in luck, Mr. Cook," said Cleve, shyly grateful.

"There is such a thing as luck, I suppose," the other agreed. "But I've noticed you have to do a deal of hard work before luck ever visits you. And

that leaves it an open question whether the ensuing success isn't the result of the hard work, after all!"

It was a very acceptable theory; but Cleve, even in his jubilation, remembered Sophy Tarvey—whose name had not entered the conversation after the prelude—with a twinge. It was a twinge of remorse; he had so completely forgotten Sophy these days, and now he owed her, and he did not want to owe her. She had done a trivially wrong thing, which had turned out inconceivably to be—for him, at any rate—the right thing; but, for good or bad, it was done. What could one expect? She did not know any better. He would have to make it up to Sophy in some way; visions of what he would do for her filed before him—visions in which wrist-watches from Tiffany, Rue-de-la-Paix toilettes, and winters in Cairo, Southern California, the Engadine, stood out prominently. He recalled himself from them to plunge happily and zestfully into work; no dreaming now, not even of *her*. He did not mean Sophy.

Even striding along towards the candy shop in the cool of the twilight, after having reluctantly covered up the typewriter—for in conscience and common humanity, you cannot clack away on the thing all night disturbing other folks' honestly earned rest!—even bent on seeing her and having a nice little talk and breaking the great news, Cleve in reality was not thinking of Sophy. To be just he was not thinking of Mrs. Gherardi, either. His mind was on his work; he had no time for sentiment; and, in fact, he would have walked straight by Sophy in his absorption, had not some slight sound or movement—or perhaps the light cough that still troubled her now and then—arrested him. He saw her white-clad figure under the high waving and

streaming cockades of tamarisk plumes, and stood still, looking intently, then made a half step: "Oh—why, it's you!"

"Hello!" said Sophy from a fluttering throat; all her poor plot and drill were forgotten; it was only by heroic effort that she kept back tears. "That you, Cleve?" she managed to say.

"I was just starting for your place."

"I—I thought I'd take a walk. It's cooler here, anyhow. You get the breeze."

"Yes, but isn't it pretty strong for you?" said Cleve, and went over and stood by her. "Mustn't catch cold *now*, when you've just begun to do so well," he said, with caressing authority; she was such a dear little thing! "Mustn't go away from Bermuda sick."

"Oh, I'm all right," said Sophy feverishly. She caught her breath. "Is—is—? Are you—? Did—?"

She could get no further, but Cleve understood. "I had a talk with Mr. Cook—" he began.

"Oh, Cleve, is—is—?"

Her excitement communicated itself to the young man, in spite of him. His spirits rose anew as he remembered Cook's words with the same incredulous delight, the same exultant sense of vindication, the same resurgent, unappeaseable ambition. He tried to tell her what had happened concisely, with detachment; but in a second they were breathing incoherent questions and answers, broken with hysterical laughter.

"Oh, Cleve, I'm so glad, I'm so glad! I just knew you could—only I was so scared—and now I'm so glad—!"

"Yes, but hush, you'll get yourself all worn out," he admonished her, regaining his own self-com-

mand. "After all, you know, it's a little too soon to be glad. One swallow doesn't make a summer—"

"But it's all right, isn't it, Cleve? It's going to be all right—?"

"Why, you know there's a great deal for me to do still—I must do a great deal," said Cleve helplessly, confronted by the futility of trying to make Sophy understand. "I've got to work, and do something worth while—"

"Why, isn't that Mr. Cook going to take those things of yours and—and fix everything all right? Isn't that what you said?"

"Yes, but I have to keep on. I have to work hard and—and back up Mr. Cook's judgment." He cast about and seized on a phrase of proved meaning. "I've got to make good, see?"

"Oh, you'll make good! You write beautifully—just beautifully. That's what I *told* Mr. Cook, only I couldn't help worrying what he'd do. Well, anyway—!" Sophy drew a brief, ecstatic sigh. "It's all right now!"

"You oughtn't to have done that really, Sophy. Taken my manuscript that way without my knowing. You mustn't ever do anything like that again—"

"Oh, Cleve, you're not mad at me?"

It was an agonized wail; in the half dusk, Cleve could see her small face pitifully drawn and tremulous, her great eyes, searching his. His heart went out to her in sheer compunction. "No, of course not! I couldn't be. Oh, don't, Sophy dear, please don't cry! I didn't mean—I was a brute to say—"

All at once, neither of them knew how, she was in his arms, on his breast, sobbing and clinging to him. Cleve held her close, murmuring endearments as he might have to a child; it was only when he felt

a kind of ardent surrender to his embrace, only when she slipped her arms around his neck, only when her lips pressed against his that he realized this was no child but a woman who loved him. With the revelation, with the timid and innocent passion of her kiss, vicarious shame flooded him; it yielded the next instant to shame for Cleve Harrod, a manly self-abasement. Who was he for this unsought but surely precious thing to be bestowed on him? He did not love her; none the less, she was sweet to hold, the soft arms around his neck were sweet, her complete abandonment was terrifyingly sweet. And while his familiar, that inner self, stood by stark and condemning, he kissed her again and again.



PART THREE



PART THREE

CHAPTER I

MR. MARSHALL COOK, together with numerous other followers of his own and kindred arts, residing in New York and its vicinity, was a member of the Oasis Club on West Forty-Fifth Street; in his bachelor days, Marshall had chambers there, and used to give select little breakfasts, the club's cellar and cuisine being in high repute. The building was a fine old brownstone front with double bay windows where the flower boxes bloomed graciously; and within there was a roomy and genteel comfort, quite the opposite of the careless, crowded, noisy Bohemianism one involuntarily expected. Other clubs with much larger memberships drawn from the same ranks could furnish Bohemianism in plenty along with their gymnasiums, swimming-tanks and the rest of the up-to-date equipment. The Oasis remained an oasis in fact, lacking these attractions, but with a staid and old-world quality as inviting and all its own. Cook was not a frequent visitor nowadays; he gave up his rooms when he married, and was now to be found at one of those cathedral-like apartments overlooking Central Park from the west or, in the hot term, down on Long Island where his wife when she was Miss Grace had bought and built years ago. They both disliked town, and with the first peep of Spring would desert the Drive for the

gardens down at Eversofar, not to return until Thanksgiving or later. It was with the more surprise, therefore, that the ancient door-man at the Oasis—a good deal of a character who had once been property man at Daly's, and could remember Adelaide Neilson's *Juliet*—beheld the novelist come posting in one pleasant October day to give an order for a luncheon; and furthermore Mr. Cook wanted to put up the out-of-town friend whom he delighted to honor at the club for a few days until he could find lodgings. He was just in time; there were only a few suites on the top floor which were rapidly filling up as members came back for the city season. Cook went around amongst them buttonholing first one and then another. "We haven't opened Number Sixty-One yet, and you know what a job it is to get in and out from the country place. He has an idea he ought to be in town where he can be reached easily," Marshall explained. "Eh? Yes, it's the same one that wrote those things that came out in *The New Spectator* last winter. Well, I thought I'd ask So-and-So, and Such-a-One," he named them. "He doesn't know a soul here except me. I believe he's never even met Alberts, only corresponded with him about the *Spectator* articles."

"Going to have Delmar?" was asked; at which Mr. Cook made a smiling grimace and shook his head. Meeting Delmar, he opined, wouldn't help this chap; they wouldn't hit it off together.

The Delmar Theatre in New York may be found between Fifth Avenue and Broadway, not far from Forty-Second Street—that is, the Delmar Theatre, the one that wears the great man's name; he is popularly believed to own or have some interest in half a dozen others, the Drury Lane, the Molière,

the Harlequin in New York City alone, not to mention Lyrics and Gayeties and lesser Delmars scattered all over the country. And as these are all very elegant and complete establishments, offering only the highest type of theatrical entertainment, it is fair to suppose—as the public in general supposes—that he has made a great deal of money. If this is a compliment, Mr. Delmar has abundantly returned it by the most conscientious, attentive and discriminating study of the public taste ever accomplished by any dramatist, producer and stage manager—he is all three—since Roscius trod the boards. He leaves the earlier classics alone; everybody is familiar with those old plays of Shakespeare's, and the verdict on them was rendered long ago; why challenge it now? As for the later ones, the creations of your Barries, Pineros, Rostands, he leaves them alone too; there are plenty of stage magnates willing to risk them. He prefers to ferret out unknown or obscure talent and assist it; a Delmar production is almost invariably the joint work of Adrian Delmar whom everybody knows and John Smith whom nobody has ever seen or heard of before. And curiously enough a Delmar production also almost invariably follows in the wake of an assured success, and—to speak vulgarly—goes it one better! When a few seasons back the western ranchman, chaps, lariat, wide hat and all, arrived on Broadway rolling cigarettes with one hand and reaching for his gun with the other, and proceeded to shoot up the town, lynch all the desperadoes and ride away with all the pretty school teachers, who held out so warm a welcome as that alert caterer to the public, Delmar? *Monty of the Bar-Circle* had not been running three months at the *Hamlet* (Lewissohn & Strauss's uptown house)

before *The Rodeo* was put on at Delmar's; and it was better put on than the Lewissohn & Strauss offering, scored a bigger hit, and without doubt turned a prettier penny for Delmar and that good-looking leading man of his, Claude Van Dorn, who has since gone into screen acting. Similarly Scribbler's play *East of Suez* caught the fancy of the town at a prodigal outlay for teakwood thrones, splendidly embroidered mandarin coats, lacquered armor, black wigs, bamboo lanterns and other accessories to its Oriental "atmosphere"; the house was sold out weeks ahead and everybody was going wild over the pidgin-English and charmingly unconscious profanity of Loraine Hawtrey, the adorable little ingénue—now with the Sellew-Lloyd Motion Picture Corporation. But alas for Scribbler, and Abe Rosenbaum the producer, and alas for Loraine! Delmar brought out *The Road to Mandalay*, and what with *his* mandarin coats, and *his* lacquer, and *his* "atmosphere," and *his* ingénue, Maude Duval, who could give Miss Hawtrey cards and spades when it came to pidgin-English and innocent swearing—so Morris Flexner, the eminent theatrical authority, asserted—what with all this, *East of Suez*, albeit first in the field, was distanced in no time at all. Scribbler and Rosenbaum must have made a fortune indeed, but rumor had it that it was nothing in comparison with Delmar's turnover.

These are well-known, outstanding examples of the impresario's unerring judgment about what the public wants, and his faithful effort to satisfy; but many more could be quoted. Murder and mystery plays, romances of the supernatural, dramas handling social problems—Delmar has made a study and generally a success of them all as these themes be-

came fashionable in turn. They are always good for a season in New York and one on the road. "Adrian Delmar presents JAMES HAMM in *The Mark of Cain*, by Adrian Delmar and John Doe." "Week of March 10th, at the Delmar Theatre, Adrian Delmar presents ALICE MASKE in *The Underworld*, by Adrian Delmar and Richard Roe." All the world has seen these and others of his posters, on mode-colored papers with lettering calculated to take the eye yet of infinite tasteful simplicity. "Addy knows how to advertise," his friend Flexner has been overheard to comment pensively; "and then he has a big hunch fixing the play to suit himself. He don't fix it to suit the fellow that wrote it, y'know." Indeed, Mr. Delmar has himself recorded the fact that "plays are *built*, not written," in one of the scholarly and authoritative essays on the arts of the stage which he occasionally publishes; you may learn everything there is to learn concerning play-producing from them, and moreover you may learn a great deal concerning Mr. Delmar; he tells you all about himself, sometimes perhaps unintentionally. If he had been born an Englishman, he would most certainly be Sir Adrian at this moment, his services to the drama have been so great; but that he is of another nationality is revealed at the first sight of him or of the personal photographs which enrich his writings—in fact, upon the mere perusal of the writings alone. His features are of that noble Babylonish cast, familiar on Broadway. He has known all the stage and other celebrities of his time, he goes everywhere and is acclaimed by everybody. "I don't know how Ad gets away with it, but he *does* get away with it!" Flexner says. Mr. Flexner's name was not on the rolls of the Oasis, being barred therefrom by one

of the club's by-laws which exhibited a racial prejudice regrettable but entirely in keeping with the character of the Oasis; yet Delmar was a member—an instance of his incomparable faculty for "getting away with it"!

Marshall Cook once wrote a play for Delmar—or rather the play was "*built not written*" from a novel of Cook's that had had a tolerable sale, *The Ivory Gates*, and appeared on the bill-boards as by Adrian Delmar and Marshall Cook. It did well; but this was their first and last piece in collaboration, although each of them independently dramatized other novels and wrote other plays which likewise did well. No one ever hinted that there was the shadow of a disagreement between them during the writing—the *building*—of the play or at rehearsals; they spoke of each other ever afterwards with the heartiest appreciation and good-will, and met always as the best of friends. Flexner, who in his position naturally knew both men, had a way of grinning significantly to hear mention made of *The Ivory Gates*, but perhaps he fancied the pose of superior knowledge. Some people said they never would have recognized the novel from the play, though the scenic effects were accurate to the final degree; but presumably the public had what it wanted, or what Delmar believed it wanted, so that that criticism is negligible. However, in the circumstances, Mr. Cook's prospective guest was not much surprised to hear that Delmar was not to be of the company, merely remarking: "I thought you said your man had written a play?"

"Everybody in the country has done that!" Cook said with a laugh. "I daresay he's brought a trunk-full of manuscripts. If a tenth of it's only half-way good, he's a find. Albert Alberts seems to think

there's something in him; *I* think there's something in him. Eh? Why, I came across him first down in Bermuda a year or so ago, but he didn't belong there. He was just drifting around. He's an American—from Ohio, to begin with, like some others I could mention, without much honor in their own country. All the talent in New York comes from the outside, doesn't it?"

"It gets away from home as fast as possible, that's certain!" retorted the other epigrammatically. "All right, trot out your embryo genius. I'll be here. Do you have to stake him to a clean shirt, too? I struck the town with three." They laughed, but for a second in the eyes of each as he looked down the vista of the years was a kind of wistful and humorous envy of that inadequately-shirted adventurer who had been himself. Ah, youth, youth! "How old is he? Twenty-something? What a nerve we all have at that age!"

It might have been noted that in the above scrap of conversation—which was a fair sample of all the rest—Mr. Cook spent no time or pains upon his young friend's antecedents; what details he gave were all of the same vague and sketchy character. In his trade of novel-writing, Marshall had the name of being something of a student of human nature; at any rate he was enough of one to know that it was wholly unnecessary to furnish the public with a biography of the coming celebrity, Cleveland Harrod. If he arrived, the public would presently fit him out itself! And the public may be relied on for ingenious, dramatic, picturesque and most captivating fiction in the guise of personal history. "I should worry, in short!" said the little man, talking to his wife after dinner in slangy freedom. "I might tell them that he had tried New York once before, and

made a flat failure of it, and was pretty much of a failure anyhow, owing to lack of ambition or of the disposition to push, or to self-distrust, or something—Heaven knows what! It seems as if luck, pure and simple, had something to do with it. I might tell everybody, but it wouldn't be interesting. And people demand that the man who does an interesting thing shall have an interesting life. They don't want him to be like themselves; they love to imagine all kinds of things about him. It would be a pity to deprive them of that harmless recreation. In the Gallic idiom, I await myself to hear that Harrod's real name is Lipkowsky, that he wrote *Woodland Scenes* under fire in the trenches of Verdun, that he can work only when dead drunk, that he saved my life when we were shipwrecked together in the West Indies——”

“That he is married and has fourteen children,” the lady contributed. “But don't you think you're going rather fast, Marshall? He may not arrive.”

“Oh, he will! He has enough of a gift. It's quite a card to have had something in *The Spectator*; they make such a to-do about their own cleverness and the cleverness of their contributors. It's smart, spicy, metropolitan—all that sort of thing,” said Cook. “Pays handsomely, too. I suppose that is what has encouraged Harrod to try it here again; he has a kind of toe-hold with *The Spectator*.”

“That and *you*,” said his wife. “If it hadn't been for you, Mr. Alberts and his *Spectator* never would have heard of your Mr. Harrod.”

“I'm not so sure. He would have arrived sooner or later. He believes in his star—after a fashion.”

They sat for a while in silence. The fall evenings were beginning to be chilly and they had had to come in from the terrace which looked towards the sea.

Presently Cook got up and touched off the fire laid on the sun-room hearth, with his cigarette; the drift-wood blazed up brilliantly, making a much cosier place of the sun-room, which with beautiful smooth pale tiles, and a fountain where two or three naked baby fauns played and kicked up their tiny goat-hoofs under the spray, and with ferns and vines trailing, had rather too cool and summery a look for the season.

"Nobady gave *you* any luncheons when you started out," Mrs. Cook said, turning upon him a look in which pride and affection lurked furtively behind a screen, as it were, of raillery. "All you had was leave to sink or swim!"

"It was different. I had got myself tolerably established before I came," said Cook; and he quoted with a flourish: "Crowns had I in my purse and goods at home! I doubt if Harrod has either."

"Why, you said Mr. Alberts paid him so well——"

"Yes, but if that's *all* he's got, you know——!"

"He ought to be able to get some hack-work to keep him going. Most of them do," said Mrs. Bessie, who had had opportunities for observation in that line. "Editing something, you know."

"A thesaurus, say?"

"A thesaurus? It sounds as if it were some extinct monster from the stone age!"

"Just about as useful!"

The butler came in to take away the coffee-tray, and incidentally, as it appeared, to lay before Cook a be-stamped envelope. "A special-delivery, sir. It just came." He moved the black, inlaid Chinese table from in front of Mrs. Cook, and soundlessly departed; and Bessie pushed her chair a little back; the fire was almost too high now.



PART THREE

and then he winds up." Cook got out a pencil and made a note of the Hundred and Thirty-eight Street address.

"But he's going to be there for your luncheon?"

"Oh, yes, of course."

Mrs. Cook thoughtfully fingered the fan in silence for a minute or two. "Marshall, do you want me to do anything for *her*? Have her meet some people? Or have them both here?"

"That's most noble of you, Bessie!" said her husband; and again they exchanged a smile of worldly wisdom, not wholly unkind. "But I don't think it's necessary. I mean I don't think it would do any good. He'll get along. Theoretically a man's wife ought to be an asset to him socially or domestically or somehow; and I'm afraid Mrs. Harrod won't be an asset. I'm afraid she's a liability. But he'll get along."

CHAPTER II

IT rained the day of Mr. Cook's luncheon, and Sophy, in the Harlem flat, lamented bitterly Cleve's stubborn opposition to taking a taxi. Say it *did* cost something! It would be just for this once, and he would get there looking nice, and save the hire in wear on his suit; and going down in the subway he would be all muddy and rumpled, they jostle you around so, and kids climbing all over you and messenger boys and working men with their old dinner buckets and everything; and the dampness made your clothes so kind of limp and baggy anyhow, and an umbrella and your pants turned up looked like a rube—and New York people think so much of those things, and—oh, well she supposed he'd got his head set so there wasn't any use talking!

"Not a bit!" said Cleve cheerfully, and kissed her. "It's all right. Nobody but men, you know. I don't care how *they* look, do I? Well, no more do they care about me! I might be a one-eyed cripple doing time in the Penitentiary, and they still wouldn't care. The thing is: can I write?"

"Is that Mr. Alberts going to be there?"

"Why, I shouldn't wonder. Mr. Cook didn't give any names. I don't know anybody, anyhow."

"Well, I hope you'll say something to him about a raise if he wants you to do any more writing for him," said Sophy. "I'll bet he wouldn't think of offering Mr. Cook what he does you. Mr. Cook would let him know where he got off!"

"Some difference between Mr. Cook and a new

one like me, though," said Cleve, laughing, whetting his razor. "But this is a—a party, you know, Sophy. It's not to talk business." He looked down at her sidewise, as he stood before the bureau beginning to shave, thinking how naïve and straightforward and honest she was with her funny little practical ways, her literal interpretations. She was all woman—and so adorably pretty! That was what a man wanted, that absolute femininity, that satisfaction in owning and being owned, combined with blue eyes and dimples, and a round little waist meet for squeezing. They had been married two weeks.

Reviewing this last year, he was conscious of having worked no harder, perhaps, but consistently with a steadier and more definite aim than before, a secure sense of accomplishment. Was it because the work had at last begun to pay, to yield him a living? He had earned money by it before; but in an uncertain and desultory fashion suited, he now thought, to the uncertain and desultory quality of the work itself. He had been, when all was said, an amateur, turning out stories, plays, poems and what-not which uniformly assumed the character of mere literary exercises, 'prentice efforts, no matter how laboriously finished, or how well inspired. Nowadays his work seemed to him no better, certainly it was no easier to do, but it had acquired some stamp of professionalism—by being marketed? Cleve was loath to think so; paid or unpaid, he had never lowered his standard, and never would, he swore to himself. All the same, there was a difference, corresponding obscurely to the difference between yesterday's nameless, footless vagabond without prospects, writing by fits and starts, living hand-to-mouth, unworthily, and the Cleveland Harrod of today, placed, a man of letters, with a volume of pieces

—which appeared first in *The Spectator*—about to be published.

“I’ll have to get some ether to take that spot off my blue skirt,” said Sophy. “It’s lucky you don’t ever get any spots on you, Cleve. You’re just naturally neat.”

The man of letters remembered that he was a married man of letters with a start of shamed surprise; for an instant, absorbed in himself, he had forgotten! It was abominable, but he had forgotten! To be sure, the position was still so new—only two weeks; he had not yet adjusted himself; he could not all the time be thinking of—Cleve briskly silenced the excuses; against his will, he detected certain ironies; and remorse invaded him with the assurance that Sophy would not forget the great fact for a second, not during these first two weeks, not during her whole life. Poor, sweet, little, devoted thing! At any rate she would never know; she had no idea of what went on within him, or how much or how little of his thought centered on herself. He believed that he filled her whole mind. It was unfair, but such, respectively, were the attitudes of men and women—attitudes chargeable to sex, not in human contrivance to make or mend. If any woman really knew her husband she would not live in the house with him another minute! Cleve told himself that he was at least no worse than the average man; if he did not deserve Sophy and Sophy’s worship, he nevertheless meant with all his heart to work for her, take care of her, make her happy—but Heaven forbid that she should know all about him!

Contrariwise, he thought he knew all about her. There never was a simpler, more open creature than Sophy. Cleve recalled the letters she wrote him during the time of their engagement—not very long

letters, yet, alas, he seldom read them to the end. Letter-writing was something of a labor for Sophy; there were mistakes in spelling; she used to finish off with a row of figures resembling plus-signs all across the bottom of the page. "Love and + + + + + . . . You know what these are." Cleve's replies were not infrequently more in the nature of those literary exercises aforementioned than love-letters; and quite possibly Sophy did not always read them to the end! "I expect I don't get all the highbrow things just right I know you don't mind me saying so it's to funny me getting tied up with a highbrow anyway. But I anyhow love you always you know that Cleve and this is for you + and I wish I was with you so I could give it to you right now." He sent her the monthly issues of *The Spectator* containing his contributions with good-humored admonitions not to "bother" about the latter, but to direct her attention to the photographs of the latest stage successes and fashionable brides, dowagers, débutantes, the sprightly little comic cartoons, the bright emphasized newness of the whole magazine. "Don't get too interested in these, though," he once scratched at the bottom of a page of theatrical beauties. "You needn't be afraid of me starting anything," Sophy wrote back. "I don't ever want to go on the stage again. I'me just going to stay home and be your little wife"—an announcement and prospect which disconcerted the young man more than he would acknowledge to himself. Later when continued prosperity emboldened him to some extravagances—"Oh, you bad boy," wrote Sophy happily. "You hadent any bisness to buy me that swell vanity; it certainly is swell and I certainly appretiate it but you know we had ought to save up all our money to get married and not spend one cent so

you just quit." Mr. Harrod, to whom it had not occurred that he must save up all his money to get married, received this good advice with a sensation which at the present moment he disliked to remember; it gave him appallingly the air of a cad in his own eyes; but Sophy did not know, so all was well!

In spite of her counsels, getting married was as distant, elusive and unreal an objective as ever to Cleve when he went up to Roscoe Lake to see her that autumn. He could think of Sophy and himself as sweethearts, but somehow not as man and wife. Having a sweetheart turned out to be a novel and agreeably disturbing experience; it was having somebody to wait and watch for him, to meet him on the station platform, flushed, eager, nervously laughing, pretty beyond belief, to hang on his arm and chatter nonsense and tell him how big and strong he was, and make an outcry over the razor-nick on his chin, and at a shadowed turning of the woodland walk to rub her head against his shoulder like a kitten. He remembered the envious melancholy with which in lonesome hours he surveyed the brides and grooms of Bermuda, every Jack with his Jill; it seemed hard then that there was nobody for him to pair with, nobody to whom it mattered one jot whether Cleve Harrod was here or gone, well or ill, sad or merry. Now here was Sophy to whom it mattered so obviously and tremendously as to trouble him even while he thrilled to her caresses. More than once he found himself actually thinking that she took the business of being in love too seriously and thrust the monstrous criticism from him in a panic. What, in Heaven's name, ailed him, he would wonder in shame and perplexity; he had wanted some woman to love him, and now that he had one, he must still be wanting, still picking a quarrel with fate. If at

such moments, a pair of green eyes, a figure of lanky elegance visited his memory unbidden, Cleve hastily turned them out, too. He blustered at himself in secret. Green eyes, indeed, and millions and social humbug! He had been a colossal fool. What a man wanted by his side, across the table, day and night, year in and year out was softness, appeal, dependence, sheer wifeliness and womanliness; he recited the litany so often that he ended by almost believing it.

Then, all at once with a cataclysmic suddenness, he found himself on the way to getting what a man wanted much sooner than he had expected, immediately, in fact! The climax, like all properly conceived climaxes of song or story, surprised in the same instant that the mind recognized it to be inevitable. Everything seemed to arrange itself spontaneously, automatically; without a word said, as it seemed to Cleve—certainly he himself was not aware of uttering any—there was the wedding-day set, concordantly with the dates for closing at Roscoe Lake and opening the St. Leon. George came shaking his hand with violence, incoherent, embarrassed, warmly pleased, striving to conceal that most beautiful and touching of all human feelings, a man's affection for another man. Lester N. Beales came, all sly winks and grins and good fellowship; Mrs. Beales came, presenting Sophy with a silver-plated bread-tray; and Sophy herself came shyly displaying to his confused masculine gaze squares and oblongs of embroidered white stuff upon which, it appeared, she had been working ever since—ever since—

“For my linen chest, you know, Cleve. It's the latest for brides to have 'em—linen-chests. Only it isn't a chest really, that's just a stylish name. You can keep the things anywhere you want—a shef-

foneer or anywhere," she explained. "I expect we won't have much furniture to start out with; we'll just get it as we go along."

Cleve wrote to his mother; he got a license; he got a ring. They were married one misty Indian Summer afternoon in the parsonage of the little mission church. Sophy wore what she carefully called her "going-away dress," a blue serge "one-piece frock" to quote her again, and also to quote the catalogue of the department store whence she had ordered it; the short, close skirt showed off her pretty legs and feet in new silk stockings—"taupe," she said they were—and pumps with high, spindle-like heels; she had on what Cleve thought a strange furry or fuzzy hat, crushed and folded down over her head and brows with attenuated feathers fringing it around; her eyes shone like stars, her bright hair was worked into a half-moon on either cheek. The minister's wife told Mrs. Beales—they both cried a little furtively—that she had never seen a prettier bride. "And I do hope it will turn out all right and that young fellow will be good to her," she added. Miriam was very pretty, too, in another "one-piece frock" of grey georgette with traceries of white beads, and a large, drooping transparent hat. She laughed, saying that she was more dressed-up than the bride—"But I can't help it. Soph knows, don't you, Soph? Whatever I got new just at this time, it had to be something I could wear in B'muda."

"You look just *sweet*, and I wouldn't have you change one thing about that whole outfit," Sophy assured her in happy enthusiasm.

Cleve recalled some of the talk afterward, as if he had heard it in a dream, he told George. "Well, you *did* seem kinda dazed," the latter divulged to him. "But most of 'em are, I guess, getting mar-

ried." George, who officiated as best man, had himself been absurdly moved and excited. He dropped the ring and had to prowl for it under the davenport-bed in the Reverend Mr. Twitchell's parlor, which was a bedroom on occasions, the parsonage being expected to extend impromptu hospitalities to impromptu guests, like all parsonages. Fortunately the ring did not roll far; George sneezed as he got up with flakes of dust clinging to his sleeve and had to stifle spasmodic seizures of laughter during the rest of the ceremony. Cleve's own most importunate concern was about the clergyman's fee; it kept pushing to the foreground of his thoughts inopportunately, pertinaciously. How should he give it? When should he give it? Before everybody? Or privately in a corner? It must be managed so as not to suggest a tip—angels and ministers of Grace defend us! He had the money all ready in an envelope, and at the end, just at the grave and exalted words of the benediction, unwillingly received an illumination: give it to George, of course! That was what the best man was for, to attend to all those details. Why had he not thought of that before? *And what was he thinking of now?* He caught himself with horror; it was over; there was silence in the little room; everyone was looking at him, smilingly expectant; he must kiss the bride, that was it!

"What on earth are you thinking about, Cleve, standing there, staring at yourself? You haven't shaved a shave for I don't know how long," said Sophy. "Got a story in your head?"

He started, and burst out laughing; and then to her surprise and dimpling relish, suddenly stooped down and kissed her again. "Story *nothing!* I was thinking of when we were married—after it was all over—remember?"

Sophy laughed too, a happy little trill. "Don't talk! Weren't we the prize pair of boobs, though? We didn't know we were married till they told us—!"

"I had to kiss you, and somehow I didn't want to—!"

"Well, I should say *not*—nor I didn't want you to, before the whole roomful of people! Do you know, Cleve, I was more scared than any other feeling. Not scared of *you*, but scared to think what we'd done. I remember thinking to myself: 'My goodness, I'm *married!*' just like that!" said Sophy, rounding her eyes, with gestures appropriate to dismay and recoil.

"Why, that's a good deal the way *I* felt, myself—!"

"Oh!" said Sophy, her enjoyment of these reminiscences a little dashed somehow. Cleve caught the change in tone with quick understanding and compunction, and a resolution not to make such a mistake again. He should have known better, he the writer of fiction, the exponent of women and men! He went on shaving, and Sophy presently, with a serious delight in the task, went and got out and inspected and brushed off his "other suit" and spread a fresh shirt—yes, he had one!—on the bed.

Contrary to what might have been expected of an ex-show-girl, for that matter of any girl of her age and up-bringing—or lack of up-bringing—she revelled in domesticities. It was she who had hunted up the little flat, two rooms, bath and kitchenette, tirelessly tramping from end to end of the city, interviewing agents and landlords, balancing a difference of two dollars in rent against advantages of locality, wall-paper or outlook, sniffing knowingly down the dumb-waiter shafts, calculating closet-

room. Cleve's patience wore out with only a day or so of it; he was ready to take anything, pay anything, trust to luck; but Sophy persevered and at last came to anchor on One Hundred and Thirty-eighth, whose good points she enumerated triumphantly. The janitor looked like a clean man; there was a window ice-box; the faucets in the bathroom were new; they agreed to paper the bedroom; and, most important of all, the parlor furniture included a desk—a real cute one, not the shut-up kind, to be sure, and it wasn't any too big for Cleve's size, but he could anyway write at it, and it had a drawer that would hold his papers, and a gas-bracket right over it, and the room had an outside window. Their bedroom looked into the light-shaft—you couldn't have *everything*, you know, and at that it was lots nicer than lots of the bedrooms in the other flats she had gone to see. The furniture was nice, too, this golden oak they called it, only some of the carvings had come unglued so they were ready to drop off, but she could fix that with a twenty-five cent tube of Sticktight; and after a while she would save up and get some lace curtains. Right now she guessed they had better buy only what they had to have, kitchen things, and something to eat off of—and my, wasn't she glad she had made herself those bungalow aprons! You couldn't cook all diked out in your good clothes. "I ain't such a grand cook at that. You'll just have to stand it while I'm learning," she said with a rather sober smile.

"No hurry about your learning. I married a wife, I didn't marry a cook," said Cleve vigorously. "We won't stay here or live this way very long, if I have any luck at all. So don't feel as if you had to cook for me all the rest of your days, anyhow."

"Oh, but I love to! I love living just this way!"

Sophy protested, and there was no questioning her sincerity. Merely to see her busily moving about with her brows puckered over problems connected with the disposition of their joint belongings, three hooks in the closet for Cleve, three for herself, his underwear in the deep bottom drawer, her hat box under the bed—merely to behold Sophy absorbed in these housewifely cares was to realize one's ideal of a contented woman. To be truthful, she puttered a good deal, changing her mind, arranging and re-arranging times out of number, and the final effect was not one of absolute order, repose and tidiness; but she was satisfied. A search amongst all the brides the country over would not have revealed so complete and touching a satisfaction. Now she curled up cozily on the bed, contemplating Cleve's preparations with a pride and fondness and an anxiety for him to look his best in which there was not a little of the maternal. If he would only get a taxi! Sophy would have sacrificed any adornment of her own, to say nothing of going without coffee or fruit or butter or any other article on their not too indulgent bill of fare to provide the hire, had it been practicable, but it was not practicable—another time perhaps—she sighed regretfully and turned to something else. "It's a good thing they didn't ask you for the evening; you couldn't go without a dress suit. There're places where you can rent 'em, only I don't believe you'd get fitted, you're so big. That's one thing you'll just simply *have* to get yourself, Cleve. You'd look lovely in a dress-suit."

"Oh, well, time enough to think about that. Wait till we're asked somewhere in the evening," said Cleve, light-heartedly. He was in some excitement over this luncheon, the men he would meet, the prospects it opened; who could say what offers and

opportunities it might mean? "Tell you what, Soph, we're one meal ahead of the game. Let's go out somewhere for dinner. Then you won't have to fuss around over the stove."

"Oh, do you want to? I was going to make fruit salad," said Sophy, disappointed. "Maybe it'll be raining still. I don't believe I'd ought to go out if it is," she added, brightening.

"Why? Don't you feel all right?" Cleve paused in the act of shrugging into his coat, looking her over with quick anxiety. She was really well now, plump, with a good color; but the New York life and climate were always to be dreaded. Sophy, divining his thought, jumped off the bed with exaggerated spryness, and threw her arms around his neck.

"Don't you worry, honey! I'm first-rate. I only want to stay home with you—just you and me—just our own selves. Don't let's go out! I know you only didn't want me to work, but I'd *rather*, honest I would!"

"All right, have it your own way!" said Cleve, a trifle huskily, straining the little figure close; she laid her cheek against him with a sigh of utter happiness. Something tightened in the young man's throat, his eyes smarted and grew dim. He knew with inconceivable pain that the strongest feeling she roused in him was pity, and thought wildly that he would give his right hand, he would give a year out of his life to love her. Alas, there is always one who kisses, one who is kissed!

He reached the Oasis punctually, not seriously damaged as to toilette either by the weather or the subway traffic, and went up the steps into the old-fashioned hall paved with squares of black and white marble, with a cut-glass chandelier fringed with prisms hanging from the towering ceiling overhead.

Mr. Cook, peaked beard, eye-glasses and all, looking as natural as possible, came out of the bay-windowed, double parlors on one side to welcome him. There were half a dozen other men. Cleve got an impression of massive divans and easy chairs, another altitudinous ceiling with another chandelier pendant from a gigantic wedding-cake ornament in the middle of it, a gallery of large steel engravings, *Bath of Cleopatra*, *Centaur Instructing Theseus*, in flat, narrow, gilt frames, a fire burning comfortably under the arched iron mantel shelf and high, arched mirror of eighteen-seventy. He was shaking hands with a middle-aged man; on a rapid survey, they were all middle-aged.

"This is Mr. Alberts, whom you know, or ought to know, by this time——"

"I have a proprietary interest in Mr. Harrod," said the other, kindly.

"Mr. Tilden—oh, you've met——" In fact, Cleve had not been in New York half a day this time before he went around to the office of the publishing-house, whereof Mr. Tilden was advertising manager; they were going to bring out the collected *Spectator* articles in time for the holiday trade, and Mr. Tilden showed him the dummy, a neatly swaggering little volume in ooze leather, sage-green, lettered in a fac-simile of Cleve's own distinct and unflourished handwriting.

"Mr. Waldemar, Mr. Harrod." Cleve knew that Mr. Waldemar's latest achievement was the setting for Dannilo's production of *Benvenuto Cellini* with the astounding veracity and vitality of its Italian Renaissance atmosphere, and the lighting effects for the casting of the statue of Perseus in the third act. He shook hands very admiringly with Mr. Waldemar, who was a heavy-set gentleman in

spectacles with the air of a professor of chemistry at the university at home, Cleve thought; at the same instant he discovered that he had been in error about the average age of Cook's guests. Walde-mar, for instance, for all his spectacles and stout figure, could not be much older than Cleve himself; Alberts had gray hair, but he was probably about thirty-five.

"Larry Symmes, Mr. Harrod. You'll get to knowing Larry all too soon. He's on the *Star*, you know, and it's his job to knock all the best sellers."

"We've got an old Indian saying back in Michigan where I come from: '*Bright sun brings out the rattlesnakes,*'" Symmes said, and laughed and looked at Cleve shrewdly and kindly out of deep-set eyes.

"Mr. Williams of New Haven——" Cleve got red, hearing the name, reminded of the judicial praise Mr. Williams, writing in the *Tri-Weekly Review*, had awarded his work. The last comer was a huge man, overtopping even Cleve, introduced as Mr. Daniel Levin by Cook, who added that this gentleman was the little leaven who leavened the whole loaf! The other boomed out in a tremendous, jolly voice that nobody ever missed the chance to make that joke about his name; it was a sure-fire hit; and furthermore he himself would now take advantage of it to say that he was Daniel in the lions' den! Ho, ha, ha, ha! "I don't do anything like the rest of the fellows, Mr. Harrod. That's the reason they ask me. It's like asking an outsider to a family dinner; the family keep their company manners and everything goes better. Besides, I'm the only living man that doesn't expect people like you to scintillate," said Mr. Levin, disposing of his cocktail at

a single gulp, and looking all around with a wink. "It's all right, boys. Go as far as you like! Everything here is strictly confidential, and if some marketable good thing occurs to you, why, say it, say it! I won't snitch. Haw, ha, ho!" And although he had said nothing conspicuously original or humorous, everyone joined in his laughter. There was some boyishly companionable quality in him, something that escaped analysis.

"Doesn't he really do anything? I mean write, you know or—or that?" Cleve asked the man nearest him as they went across the hall. It happened to be Williams and he answered with a smile that Levin's representations were perfectly correct. "Cook always asks him; everybody asks him. He doesn't 'do anything'; used to own a brewery——"

"A *what?*?" ejaculated Cleve.

"A brewery," the other repeated, amused. "Several of them, as a matter of fact, I believe. Of course, the recent legislation has done away with that species of business enterprise—confiscated it, practically; so Dan has had to retire, willy-nilly. We understand he had already made a handsome fortune, luckily; you might not think it, but he is a man of force and ideas—a very active, energetic man. He and I were at college together—class of '08; he was end-man in the tug-of-war, our senior year. We used to have a little club among the undergraduates——"

"A lunch club, yes. Called ourselves the Ham. And," said Levin, overhearing this. "And do you know, Mr. Harrod, we had a re-union the other day, the whole fifteen of us. Very remarkable thing! We were all there, all in good health, all reasonably prosperous, and every man-Jack respectable! It's a record."

"What was your college, Mr. Harrod?" Symmes asked him.

Cleve named it. "But I didn't finish," he added quickly.

"I never began," said Cook. A systematic canvass revealed that the only college men at the table were Williams and the late brewer, who thereupon remarked that it seemed as if some sort of moral ought to be drawn from the fact. "It undoubtedly has some significance," said he solemnly, "but blest if I know what it signifies! This is Chablis, the famous Oasis Chablis, Mr. Harrod. I look towards you!"

They were all very kind, very friendly; though Cleve fancied that every one of them, even Cook himself, had the air of merely pausing by the way-side out of good-natured civility to a new fellow-pilgrim, and would presently hurry on, indifferent to whether they ever encountered him again. Perhaps the top speed at which everybody ate, drank, smoked, joked, helped to create this impression; they were busy men with engagements, and the New York day is never long enough for the affairs that must be crowded into it. There was scarcely any shop talk—none so personal, at any rate, as to shut the young man out or make him feel his newness; someone told him that Waldemar had been charged with the decoration and furnishing of the club rooms, and the artist explained that he was on the house-committee.

"I thought I'd be reactionary in the fashionable cant, so I left a great many things almost exactly as they were," he said. "There is so little that can be done with Victorian modes, why not allow them to be Victorian?"

"That accounts for our mirrors and red velvet

stair-carpets and Landseer's *Monarch of the Glen* and those Greek palace interiors with Venus caressing Cupid, *et cetera*," Tilden said. "Venus and Cupid both extremely lightly clad, as you'll notice. Levin, here, took Mr. Benworthy"—he was referring to the famous English novelist—"to that picture and told him in a serious way that it prompted the inference that in classic times they had a system of central heating! And Benworthy said: '*Ah yes! Quite so!*' as solemn as a hearse!"

"But he did say afterwards that he was not sure at times whether Americans were in fun or earnest!"

"I was curious to see how he'd take it," said Levin, half-apologetically. "Of course, these English writers are big men in their lines—I know *that*—but most of 'em seem to me to take themselves too seriously."

"It is we ourselves that take *them* too seriously," said Cook; "but their humorists seldom come over here, haven't you noticed that? Nobody on this side makes any fuss about Anstey and Jacobs; nobody ever seemed to realize that Gilbert was a wit and a philosopher. It's only their solemn books that pay."

"You forget the indecent ones—the sex-mongers. Tell Harrod what you said to John Arnolds, Dan."

"Oh, *that!*!" Levin said, reluctantly, yet grinning; he complied, speaking to Cleve. "Why, that was another experiment. Arnolds wrote that thing, *Passion Flowers*, you know. You've read it, I expect. All the old maids say its so *poetic*—which means it can't be read aloud in a mixed company. And Arnolds himself claims that all his work is *pure*; *pure* studies of the purest relations between

men and women! Indecent? *He* indecent? Not on your life! *He* wouldn't write anything deliberately prurient because he thought it would sell—never! And that mysteriously gets into print, and we hear there's a question of the censor banning the book, and immediately there's a rush to get it—among the pure-minded, of course!—and it sells into countless editions. It occurred to me to experiment—find out just how honest Mr. Arnolds was, you know. So I said to him: 'This talk about *Passion Flowers* as if it were erotic must be most offensive to you.' He sighed like a martyr, and said it was, it was. 'So *unjust!*' says I. And he sighed some more. 'Why, sir,' said I then. 'That book appeared to me perfectly harmless. Most harmless book I ever read!' 'Hey?' says the eminent author, getting rather red in the face. 'Yes, sir, harmless,' said I earnestly. 'Harmless as skim milk!' And he stalked off and never recognized me again—oh, haw, ha, haw!' Mr. Levin leaned back and launched his resounding laugh at the third cut-crystal chandelier Cleve had seen that day, in profound enjoyment of the celebrated Englishman's naïve discomfiture. "Pure! Pure as the driven snow!" said he, between outbursts, wagging his head.

This, to the best of Cleve's recollection, was the only literary topic (so to call it) touched on during the meeting, which broke up shortly thereafter. Cook evaded his thanks. "Some day I hope to offer you for membership in the Oasis," he said. "That was a fairly representative set of men. You'd like them all, I think. They stand close acquaintance."

"I think Mr. Levin is a little formidable," said Cleve; and he took it as some vindication of his ability to understand his fellow-man—surely a gift essential to a writer—that Mr. Cook neither laughed

at nor resented the comment. He nodded appreciatively and assentingly.

“Dan is formidable,” he said. “I would rather have his plain man’s judgment than that of all the critics put together. He is the embodied sanity, humor and intelligence, the ultimate horse-sense of the American public. Address yourself to that, you will survive when all the fads and faddists are one dishonored dust—and what a sermon I am preaching, to be sure!” said the little man, pulling himself up in some confusion. “But that’s why we all like Dan Levin.”

As they walked away from the Oasis together, they came upon a well dressed and personable gentleman walking towards it, who nodded to Cook, with a glance at his companion; and the novelist thereupon halted him. “This is Mr. Delmar—there is only one,” he said to Cleve, smiling. “My friend, Mr. Harrod.”

Delmar went through the introduction with the studiously casual manner of those who spend their lives under the public eye; he had been an actor in his day, and the habit of feeling himself stared at never left him. Perhaps he, too, took himself seriously—as he well might, considering his parts and achievements. He repeated Cleve’s name in a rich, deep, and mellow utterance; and—so vast and varied was his acquaintance—was scarcely surprised when the young fellow ventured to say with a sober smile that this was not the first time they had met.

“Ah? You are an actor?” said the great man agreeably, but with a swift, appraising eye; the question in his mind, no doubt, was what cowboy, chasseur, backwoodsman or member of the traffic squad this brawny youngster could have portrayed in what one of those invaluable contributions to

American dramatic literature, "by Adrian Delmar and So-and-So?" Cleve hastily set him right, not without amusement.

"Oh no, Mr. Delmar. I helped shift scenery for a week at the *Molière* when *Single Standards* was running. We used to see you every night; and once you told me to move the settee in the garden scene farther down front."

Delmar laughed. "Ah, I see! One must live, eh?" said he genially. "And now?"

Cook intervened, fitting his *pince-nez*. "Now he's writing for the *New Spectator*. One lives."

"Writing? And in Mr. Cook's company? We shall hear of you, I have no doubt," said Delmar, with his grave and somehow not unbecoming flourish. He went on; and Cleve too went on, back to Sophy and the fruit salad, in high spirits.

CHAPTER III.

“SAID-BY-THE-WAY” duly appeared about Christmas, putting forth its two little green covers on all the bookstands, in truly emblematic style, as Cook said. Indeed, many hopes sprouted venturesomely with that modest volume. The critics were kind to it—kinder than he himself would have been in their place, Cleve thought. It seemed to him that the spirit in which the average reviewer treated the average book, be it poetry, fiction, essays or what-not, was more lenient than scholarly; they were too good-natured, or too afraid of committing themselves. His own critical utterances were governed by an unflinching honesty, on the theory that just condemnation is better than indiscriminate praise for writer and public alike. *Said-by-the-Way* got neither, as a matter of fact; the professional readers apparently did not quite know what to make of it, and took refuge in vague statements about “lightness of touch,” “Barrie-like whimsicality” and so on, but the fact that the articles had appeared first in *The Spectator* never failed of mention, and Cleve perceived that in the view of many this conferred a certain *cachet*—something which at once amused and irritated him. Time was when Mr. Harrod would have regarded admittance to *The Spectator’s* columns as the final goal, a seat with the Olympians, a ticket to immortality, but now—! Why is it that winning a prize invariably cheapens it? No man of sense or spirit values overmuch the

thing he has done; it is always the thing he is going to do that beckons and incites.

Accordingly, while *Said-by-the-Way*, after the rush of gift book buying had subsided, lingered on the shelves, or "moved slowly" in the humane phrase of the publishers—"There really is not much sale for essays in this country, unless by some very well-known Englishman," Mr. Tilden told the author in confidence—Cleve was already over head and ears in new work. The famous desk had been supplanted by a table bought second-hand—if not third- or fourth-hand—on Sixth Avenue; though dreadfully down-at-heel as to looks, it was still strong and whole and would accommodate the typewriter and Cleve's blotting-pad and elbows all at the same time. Sophy grieved in private over this disreputable visitor—rack and thumbscrews could not have extracted a word of complaint from her in Cleve's hearing—and cautiously tried to improve its appearance by coats of evil-smelling "antique" stain applied to its legs, and by embroidered scarves spread over the top, when it was not in use. But her reverence for Cleve's manuscript, letters, proofs and everything else that was his even to his pipe and fountain pen and pocket knife, was so profound that she ere long abandoned the effort to beautify the locality where all these articles herded together, fearful of injury to them or of putting them out of place. Books, cigar stubs, ink, sheets of paper with original drafts of this or that, torn across or crumpled into wads—all the litter stood from week to week, sacred from her duster. "He likes it that way," she would explain; the Tables of the Law held no more solemn commandment for Sophy.

At first, when he was working, she went tiptoeing about the flat, setting dishes down, handling the broom with painful gentleness, furious with herself

for dropping a pen or letting a door slam, in a torturing anxiety not to disturb him. The fact that if noise could have done it, all she could make would be negligible in comparison with the elevated trains thrashing by every minute, the other tenants holding bawling conversation with one another from the fire-escapes, the janitor and delivery boys shouting up the dumbwaiter shaft, the normal incessant stir and rumor of the street, did not occur to her, in her eagerness to shoulder responsibilities. Cleve caught her at last in these mouse-like endeavors and laughed and petted her out of them.

"Why, I can write anywhere, when I'm really at it, not just dawdling. Fire off a seventy-five alongside of me and I wouldn't even jump—I wouldn't hear it!" he said. "You mustn't have me on your mind so much."

"But I *want* to, Cleve! I mean to be the right kind of wife," said Sophy firmly. "There're such lots of silly women. I was reading a story about one of 'em in *The Morning Mail*, the household section, you know; they have stories that come out a piece at a time. It was called *Neville Davenport's Wife*. This real nice fellow marries this flighty girl, and he gives her *everything*, and she spends *everything* on herself. I just *hated* her—and there's a girl all the time that he could have married that would have been lovely to him, and you can't help feeling so sorry for both of 'em even if it is just a story. I don't believe I ever had a story appeal to me like it did. I read it *all*—clear through! She dies in the end."

"You mean Mrs. Neville Davenport?"

"Yes. She goes off and leaves him just some old canned salmon to eat when he comes home in the evening, and he eats it and gets kind of this pto-

maines, I guess. Anyway, he's terribly sick, and *she* don't care, she goes out riding in an auto with another man and there's an accident and she gets killed. The way it's told you can see she's just that kind. It's awfully true to life," said Sophy thoughtfully. "It appealed to me like everything. I just thought: 'Well, I wouldn't treat *my* husband any such way! It's a good lesson!' Selfish, silly thing! It doesn't say right out, but I think he's supposed to marry the other one afterwards. She goes and takes care of him when he has the ptomaines. I'd like to see any other woman taking care of you, with me around!" said Sophy with alarming ferocity.

"Well, but you ought not to take care of me so—so hard," Cleve said. "You'll wear yourself out worrying, and you'll spoil me into the bargain. *I'll* get selfish."

"No, you wouldn't ever, Cleve. There's a story begun this week that's going to be on that order, though, I believe—the man's selfish instead of his wife, you know. *Marcia Dane's Husband* 's the name of it. It's by the same people."

"The same people?"

"Yes. *Incorporated Authors of America*—"

"Oh yes, that's a syndicate. They sell those stories to newspapers all over the country. It's part of what they used to call 'Patent Insides,'" Cleve explained to her, thinking with inward mirth that "Patent Insides" was even a more accurately descriptive title than its originators were aware. "But different people write them."

"Uh-huh," said Sophy without much interest; but after a moment she asked: "Do they get much money for those sort of stories, Cleve? That they sell that way?"

"Why, I daresay, I don't know."

"I should think they would, selling 'em all over," Sophy said in her practical little way. "You could write a lovely one. Why don't you?"

"Maybe I will some day," said Cleve. "Now I've got to work." He put her off his knee and turned back to the table with a half sigh.

All this time he had seen Cook only once or twice and the other men of the luncheon not at all, excepting Levin, who, to Cleve's surprise, recognized him and stopped him on the street with thunderous felicitations about the book. But the Cooks were now back in town, and one day Mrs. Bessie's imposing limousine conveyed her to the Hundred-and-Thirty-Eight Street apartment. Sophy, coming home from a series of domestic errands with Cleve's shoes newly half soled, a pint of oysters in a cardboard bucket, and ten cents' worth of cheese, beheld the other lady gowned and furred with her customary elegance descending at the entrance, with a momentary impulse to flight. She was not afraid of Mrs. Cook; but Cleve had gone out, the rooms were in some disarray; and here she herself was with the parcels and oysters, no gloves, and her hat on anyway and everyway! Sophy felt vehemently that she would just as lief Mrs. Cook went away supposing them not to be at home. She said to herself that she did not mind little Mr. Cook; he was just a man even if he did write books; he couldn't write any better ones than Cleve. He was just a man anyhow. But those ladies! That Mrs. Gherardi! They were both of them nothing but *social butterflies* like Neville Davenport's Wife—who was thus characterized repeatedly by the author in a picturesque and original phrase that made a deep impression on Sophy. She hesitated on the verge of retreat; but Mrs. Cook, looking all around to make sure of the

address, caught side of her and advanced smilingly, so that there was no escape. Every window in the vicinity was cluttered up with heads attracted by the automobile, the moleskin wrap, the smart chauffeur with his formidably expressionless face.

“Mrs. Harrod! I’m so glad! Isn’t this lucky? I might have missed you!”

“Cleve isn’t home,” Sophy blurted out in an attack of shyness that vexed her to the soul.

“Oh, I didn’t expect to see *him*. I know all about them, you know. Mr. Cook’s just such another,” said Bessie humanely enough casting about to establish a footing of interests and experiences in common. “They can’t be bothered with people making calls—I believe *all* the men hate calls anyhow—”

“Oh, he’d love to see you—only he’s out—I don’t know when he’ll be back—” Sophy faltered; but as Mrs. Cook continued to stand there looking pleasant and expectant, there seemed to be nothing for it but take her upstairs. “You couldn’t hardly have helped seeing Cl—Mr. Harrod if he had of been here—there wouldn’t have been any place for him to go to, or us either. I guess it must seem terribly little to you—”

“Why, there’s plenty of room for just you two,” said Mrs. Cook warmly. “You don’t want a great big place; it would be so much trouble to take care of. Is that where he writes?”

She had struck the right note! Sophy melted, confidence and self-possession magically restored by the nicely mingled admiration and respect and curiosity which the other managed to throw into the question and into the gaze she fixed on Cleve’s table. To tell the truth, Mrs. Bessie, in a flash of inspiration, modelled her demeanour on that of certain pilgrims to Mr. Cook’s shrine with whom she had

had to deal; and it gave the little lady, who was kind-hearted in her way, a sincere satisfaction to observe that as a passport to Sophy's good graces the small ruse at which she might ordinarily have laughed was successful.

"Yes. I *never* disturb it," said Sophy in pleased wifely pride and concern. "It looks all mussed up, but that's the way he wants it. Won't you sit down, Mrs. Cook?"

Mrs. Cook sat down, and having her cue, went on making herself agreeable in the same vein. They had read Mr. Harrod's book; wasn't it charming? It was a perfect mystery to her where he got all those ideas. What were his hours for work? Did he wait until he was in the mood or had an inspiration, or could he write any time? Would he discuss his books with Sophy beforehand, or were they just as new to her as to anyone else, the general public, you know, when they came out? It must be so interesting to be right *with* an author while he was—er—ah—doing it!

"Why, I guess you know as much about that as I do. You're with Mr. Cook right along," Sophy said simply, in a little surprise.

"Well, it's—it's more of a business—more like plain *business* with *him*," said Mrs. Marshall hastily, with private anathemas on her own inadvertent over-acting, and dashed along to another question in a panic. "Does the noise of the typewriter make you nervous?"

"Oh my, no! But even if it did, I'd never say anything, of course. I believe in being a help to him every way I can, like a wife should," said Sophy earnestly and confidentially. Mrs. Cook, against every probability, had turned out a very likable person. In Sophy's opinion, she was as easy as an old

shoe, spite of all the money they had. To be sure, she was pretty old—too old to be much of a social butterfly nowadays; and that might make her easier. She was speaking; she was inviting Sophy to go to the matinée with her next Thursday afternoon; she would come for her and bring her back, after they had gone to the Ritz or somewhere and had tea or something. Sophy was in a tremendous state of excitement over the prospect when Cleve came home. She was going to wear her one-piece frock and the hat that went with it and her taupe stockings and pumps. Mrs. Cook was so nice! Not motherly exactly, but real nice! And Cleve didn't mind her going out and leaving him alone just this once, did he?

"Mind?" I wish you'd go and have a good time whenever you get half a chance. You stay here and don't see anybody but me all day long," he said remorsefully. "I've been afraid you'd get lonesome." She cut him short with tender severities. He mustn't say things like that, not *ever!* She would rather be there with him than anywhere on earth. Very likely at that same moment Bessie Cook was telling her husband that she really wanted to do something for the Harrods, but that poor little thing—! It was hopeless. She, Bessie, had compromised on taking her to the theatre, and expected to be bored to death; that wouldn't make any difference if it helped Mr. Harrod along—but it wouldn't. She was just clearing her conscience.

In the meanwhile *Said by the Way*, from "moving slowly" ceased by degrees to move at all. However, it paid the advance royalties, to Cleve's relief; that money was almost gone by now. He had a score of manuscripts circulating amongst the editors and literary agents, and picked up a little

here and there as time went on; but he was a slow worker, and sales were slow. There were those moments of black discouragement and self-distrust with which he was sadly familiar, those other moments when he buoyantly decided that he had merely stumbled into a rut of bad luck and must work out of it with what patience he could muster. But these days it was harder to be patient, success was of more immediate urgency. There was Sophy. He could not go out and get a stevedore's job in some pinch now—not that Sophy would have raised the slightest remonstrance or looked upon him as anything less than a god and a hero whatever he did. It was his own pride that interposed.

Then one day when his bank balance—tell it not in Gath!—was down to twenty-nine dollars and seventeen cents, he was notified from the office of the Greenhouse Players down on Tenth Street that his series of three dramatic sketches, *Woodland Scenes*, had won the prize in the competition they had been conducting, and would be presented in accordance with the published conditions! They took pleasure in sending him the enclosed cheque, and would ask him to call, if convenient, next Monday the 7th, at four o'clock, to meet their director, Mr. Wallace, and talk over details. With hearty congratulations they were, etc., etc. *Hurrah!* Cleve in fact hurrahed so exuberantly that Sophy flew in from the kitchenette where she had been scrubbing the sink with her head tied up in a towel, startled and inquiring; the sight of the little slip of buff paper was an ample explanation, but Cleve seized and hugged her, bungalow-apron, scrubbing-brush and all, reciting the glorious news. "Goodness, I was afraid you'd knocked the milk-bottle off the window-sill!" she ejaculated in relief. "Well, that's fine! Those

things were so short, they didn't take any time to do, did they? I wouldn't wonder if it would be a good thing to write some more on that order—so as to have 'em on hand, in *case*, you know!"

Cleve scarcely heard her in his exultation. He had actually forgotten all about the Greenhouse Players—so named from the fact that they had set up their more or less make-shift theatre in the dismantled conservatory and out-houses of one of the old knickerbocker mansions in that quarter of the town. You entered by an alley of the ancient mews, across the one-time stable-yard paved with bricks with little formal cypress trees in tubs on either hand; within it was bare, cleanly and not too comfortable with a few dozen cramped seats, curtains of green burlaps, the minimum of scenery, and inadequate lighting. Nevertheless, the place was attractive, and had arrived at some reputation for bringing out works both bizarre and meritorious. Some of its performances and performers had been moved bodily to Broadway, and achieved pronounced success; visiting dramatic and literary celebrities were directed thither; wealthy, fashionable dilettanti patronized it; and, surest test of all, as a commercial venture, it paid—or was understood to pay! The expenses, in conscience, could not be heavy; and all the personnel, actors, managers and financial backers alike, were young, ambitious, high-minded, willing to forego many material advantages for the sake of Art. When in their search for the true, the good and the beautiful which should also be the new—perhaps the most imperative requirement—they advertised their contest with a cash prize—not the most munificent truly, but it would suffice—the promise of production, and a jury that included Mr. Adrian Delmar, Mr. Giacinto Dannilo, Professor

Williams of New Haven and others, Cleve entered his manuscript without much thought; it was only another iron in the fire. That had been three months back; the prize-money was a windfall, manna in the wilderness; but it was of less importance to Cleve than the accompanying opportunity. "This is the entering wedge," he thought. "Get something produced, put before the world, no matter if well or indifferently!" But the Greenhouse would do it well, he was confident; the *Scenes* were admirably suited to their stage and artists. They were people of intelligence and understanding, as the enterprise itself demonstrated; they would interpret him with all the taste, the grace, the skill he could demand. And on his side, he would not be exigent; he would be willing to listen to professionals who knew the needs and possibilities of the stage as thoroughly as these must. Without doubt they would recommend cuts and alterations which—unless too revolutionary, too destructive—he promised himself he would attend to in the spirit of a philosopher. People have not hesitated to carve up Shakespeare; so why should Cleve Harrod resent the operation, he thought, with a smile.

He went down to Tenth Street that following Monday, and threaded his way to the Greenhouse doors, stirring some memories of days not so far behind him when he had used to frequent and study this New York Alsatia, and had thought to discern a certain shoddy quality in its Alsatianism. The Greenhouse was not in existence at that time, though there were others of similar claims and character. Most of them sprang up, flourished and withered down over night—a disturbing recollection. He found the office stowed away in a corner, and found the director, Mr. Wallace, and the stage-manager,

Mr. Ahrends, and the casting manager, Mr. Sigmund Kraus; and to his pleased amazement Mr. Waldemar, whose co-operation, it appeared the Players had secured—Cleve wondered inwardly at what price! Waldemar was no unrecognized genius like—ahem!—certain others who could be named; Waldemar had definitely arrived; and already after some study of the scenario which had been drawn up at his request for his special use, he had presented a staggering catalogue of requirements.

“It’s all experimental, of course. Everything’s in the rough, as you might say, and some of these ideas that have—ah—suggested themselves to me may prove impractical,” he said, and the rest acquiesced, with an equal indifference to the possible cost of such experimenting. What had become of the frugality and simplicity which had been, as it were, the Greenhouse stock in trade? The question did indeed cross Cleve’s mind, but it was not in nature that it should linger there. They were all so interested, so gratifyingly enthusiastic, their praise was so judicious, the few changes they hinted at so well considered; putting aside personal interest, it was pure delight to be associated with such men. Nor was it a slight tribute to the merits of the piece that they had thought enough of it to engage an artist like Liza St. John for the leading part, a musician of Smith-Cooper’s standing to write the score for Cleve’s songs and chorals. As for Waldemar’s settings, they still would be simple; in the temple scene, for example, only a pair of columns, a tripod with the sacred fire, a bronze-footed couch, a leopard-skin on the floor, some roses in a classic vase. Cleve did not know, nobody knew whence these properties were to come; Waldemar said something about copies from the *Metropolitan*; but these

things were his business, experimental along with the antique chests, the marble terminal statues, the peasant costumes, the peacocks and white goats which also were to figure amongst his experiments. They seemed to have given him a free hand; and they likewise must know their own business. Cleve came away a little dazed, but revolving new dialogue, new verses, betterments here and there; he only paused once in a while for a fugitive, ecstatic glance into the future. Nothing succeeds like success.

Mounting the stairs he heard voices in brisk conversation, broken with bursts of laughter behind some door which presently proved to be that of his own apartment—and one of the voices, one of the laughs was indubitably masculine! He had left Sophy alone, expecting no one, and now thought with amusement of the return of the sultan in the Arabian Nights, of Rawdon Crawley surprising Rebecca, of sundry other variations on the same theme by any number of Gallic writers; would Sophy have been pleased to know that he was not in the least jealously apprehensive? She must have got the janitor up to fix that window-cord, Cleve was thinking as his key grated in the lock.

Sophy came running to the door, very pretty, excitedly laughing. "Oh, I'm so glad you got here in time! Who do you think's here? It's him, Mr. Flexner—" she turned her head, calling out to the visitor, "It's my husband. Cleve, meet Mr. Morris Flexner." And hereupon there rose up before Cleve's questioning gaze a stout, immaculate, dressy gentleman with a swarthy complexion, a salient nose, and a pair of acute black eyes with which he gave Cleve a stare of exceedingly frank and minute appraisal.

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Harrod," he said then, extending his hand on which there was a signet-ring of magnificent design and proportions; and added as if by way of explanation: "I've heard about you from Delmar."

"But he didn't know about *me*, Cleve!" Sophy cried out, in great spirits. "It's the funniest coincidence! We know each other from 'way back. He give me the first job I ever had at the old Lyric. 'Way back!" she repeated, still marvelling. "I was just a kid—'bout sixteen, I guess. It was that long ago!"

"Yeah, that's a terrible long while!" said Flexner, with a wink to Cleve. "She must be the whole of twenty-two now. Ain't it awful? My, *my!*" He wagged his head with a humorous assumption of solemnity. "How time flies! Here's she's an old married woman!"

"You're connected with the Lyric management, Mr. Flexner?"

"Used to be. Not any more, though. Time she speaks of I was on the road with a Rosenbaum show—"

"It was *Sweet Violets*—I remember just as well," said Sophy.

"I stay here altogether now," Mr. Flexner continued. "N'York's the place, hey? Place is right!" He declined Cleve's offer of a cigarette with open, though good-natured distaste. "Not for mine! I want a real man's smoke. If the little lady don't mind cigars—?"

"Who? *Me?* What d'you know about *that?*?" said Sophy, apostrophizing the ceiling. "Mr. Flexner asking *me* if I mind him smoking! Old times it would of been: 'Say, girlie, run and hunt me up a box of matches, will ya?'"

"Well, you'd have hopped and done it, too, I guess—"

"Sure I would! I was crazy about being on the stage. But he never took that much notice of me, Cleve," she added with fresh laughter. "And when he come up just now he didn't even remember me! It was me did the remembering. That's all they think of the chorus. But wasn't it a funny coincidence? Him coming to see you and finding *me*, I mean?"

"To see me," echoed Cleve, pricking up his ears.

"Delmar's suggestion," said the other casually. "Seems he's seen something of yours—this prize-play the madame's been telling me about. Got anything else?"

Cleve was regretfully obliged to reply that he had nothing else at the moment—well, nothing much—he *had* written a comedy—

Mr. Flexner inquired not unreasonably what was the matter with a comedy?

"Well, it's very light—I don't suppose Mr. Delmar would care about it—"

"He can't tell without seeing it, and it's a cinch *you* can't," said Flexner genially. "You just let me have that, huh? It'll be taken good care of." Upon which invitation and assurance, Cleve, nothing loath, went and fished out the manuscript of *The Frame-Up* and consigned it to Mr. Flexner's guardianship in a good deal of jubilant commotion which he tried and hoped to conceal. At any rate the other either was, or benevolently pretended to be, unaware of anything out of the way in the transaction; Cleve was probably not the first excited young playwright that seasoned theatre man had seen. "This prize-winner now? How about it?" he further

wanted to know, fixing his rather disturbingly shrewd eyes on the author. And as Cleve told him, not without some complacency perhaps, he listened sphynx-like as one who had heard it all before, through incalculable ages and aeons. "Wallace and his bunch surely are spreading themselves," was his comment. "They're all right. Still——! I don't know that I'd be in a hurry to tie up with 'em."

CHAPTER IV

THE days and weeks that followed were the happiest Cleve had ever known, perhaps the happiest he would ever know, as he sometimes warned himself with a painful veracity of imagination. Not again for the first time could he behold the creatures of his invention embodied; not again for the first time would his dreams come true. This might only be a prelude to greater experiences; hard work rewarded by success might become a well-worn story, hard work and failure be accepted as incidental; but he knew that he would always look back upon this time with longing. Yes, gray-headed and at the summit of his career, old Cleve Harrod would be envying young Cleve the new-found, new-tasted delights of these days!

To be sure, the course of *Three Woodland Scenes*, like another much more celebrated course, did not always run smooth. There were occasional brushes with the managers, the scenic artists, the players themselves. To begin with, the title must be changed from *Three Woodland Scenes*, which Mr. Wallace insisted had no point or character, to *In Arcady*, which Cleve thought had even less. Later on, Mr. Ahrends besought him to write in a "duo"—Ahrends' name for it—that is to say, a scene with a garden-wall, a fountain playing and a full moon, and a Pierrot and Pierette gambolling clandestinely amongst all these properties; it was to provide an opportunity for Mademoiselle Halina Leczinska and her dancing partner Alexis, and Ahrends was much

disappointed and prophesied dire consequences upon Cleve's refusal. The leading man had a serious falling-out with Kraus, and withdrew from the cast; he was replaced by a slender young Jew with a head like Lord Byron's and a wonderful voice, who, as it seemed to Cleve, had talent enough to act any rôle except the one he was specifically required to act, that of a gentleman. Poor Krautschnitt on his side developed a touching admiration for the author of the piece; he had the true Jewish reverence for achievement, and would attend devoutly to Cleve's lightest word, bring into use every technical device to carry out his most casual suggestion—yet still the part escaped him. He was hopelessly out of the picture with its elusive gay elegance, its atmosphere of good breeding; whereas Leonard Thorpe, his predecessor, who was fifteen years older, and had not half the other's endowment of brains, talent or good looks, was as thoroughly at ease in it as Charles Surface or Mercutio would have been—two characters in which Thorpe was conceded to be well-nigh ideal. But Cleve was too humane to find fault or to attempt instruction, too humane even to betray amusement at Mr. Krautschnitt's invincibly grotesque name, which he might have altered without affronting stage traditions, certainly; that he had never dreamed of doing so perhaps illuminates him. Miss Liza St. John, *per contra*, was born Maloney; she had the most beautiful red hair in the world, the whitest and most perfectly rounded arms; she could dance like Titania, and possessed a temper rivalling that of the latter lady, if all reports were true. However, she did not exercise it, owing to the fact that she liked her part, in which indeed she was most bewitching, and moreover quite openly and frankly liked the author. In fact, Mr. Harrod in his shabby

clothes, boyishly shy, with a gravity in which there lurked a certain humor, sincerely courteous to all women, was a sufficiently unusual person on Broadway, or even at that home of the altruistic-minded, the Greenhouse Players. Everybody in the company liked him.

The scantiness of wardrobe just now hinted at, was becoming a matter of deep concern to Sophy nowadays. She sponged, pressed, re-buttoned, unavailingly; even Cleve's "other suit" had begun to show signs of wear. And what, *what* would they do if this unexpected publicity thrust upon them—as was highly likely—the necessity to entertain and be entertained? Neither one had the suitable apparel—to judge, that is, by the illustrated magazines, the shop-windows, the descriptions of Mrs. Neville Davenport's costumes, and what Sophy herself had seen on gala evenings at the big hotels in Hamilton. "I suppose I could get by with my navy-blue crepe—it's not an 'evening shade' like they advertise, but it's thin over the neck and arms—and I could kind of cut it out at the top, for that matter, I guess," she meditated aloud. "But you *ought* to have a full dress suit, Cleve. All the men do. It's a whole lot easier for a man to dress than a woman, because you just need the one thing, and once you got it, you got it for good. They don't change styles enough to notice. Don't you believe you could get one? You don't have to go to the highest-priced place. You could try wherever it is the waiters get 'em."

"All right. I will when I need one," Cleve roused from his writing long enough to say, and Sophy dutifully refrained from further argument; she did not believe in nagging a man about *anything*, she would announce gravely. Two or three times she went

down with Cleve to rehearsal, "to give those lady actresses the once-over," she confessed to him with a meaning look and rather forced and uneasy laughter. Cleve was manifestly so far from understanding her as to restore her confidence; she had all she could do to keep from throwing her arms around his neck, and telling him that he was a dear, darling boy—*her* boy—and the biggest boob ever! It was a *scream*—thus Sophy gleefully commented to herself—to see all those girls flagging Cleve, just crazy for him to notice 'em. Pretty near any man as handsome as him would of been wise right off—but *Cleve!* Simply nothing doing! He couldn't see one of 'em. It was a *scream*!

The newspapers now began to note the latest activities at the Greenhouse; Cleve's name and other work were mentioned favorably; and Symmes had a friendly paragraph in his literary supplement to the Sunday edition. A day or so afterwards, Cleve happened upon the editor going out to luncheon with Mr. Daniel Levin, who promptly invited him to make a third in the expedition, and convoyed them to a little hole-in-the-wall of an Italian restaurant where it appeared he was well known; the proprietor came out of a den at the rear, grinning under his piratical moustache, to welcome him. "Dan knows everybody and everybody is his friend. Can't understand it!" Symmes said with a parade of wonder and perplexity.

"I used to sell to this fellow," Levin explained. "For a while after Prohibition came in, he would *sub rosa* furnish old-timers like me whom he regarded as accomplices with a stake in the nefarious transaction, with drinks in three grades of mounting strength. Number One had an ordinary kick, Number Two tasted innocent but it took you by the

hand and led you into green pastures, and Number Three—*Woo!*” He made a dramatic gesture.

“You never brought me here *then*,” said Symmes reproachfully. “It didn’t last, I suppose?”

“No, it was too lovely. Somebody came around and gave Gennaro a friendly tip that the dry agents were getting on, so he quit. He says he’s going back to Italy.”

Cleve told them about his engagement at Heilbronner’s whom, it transpired, Levin also knew, to the latter’s amusement—and when Mr. Levin was amused, everyone with a considerable radius turned around; his mighty laugh made the very tumblers on the attendants’ trays to shudder and chime together. They sat down at one of Gennaro’s little tables, and had onion soup and a dish of his famous spaghetti, and very good coffee and cigars. “There used to be little pot-bellied bottles of Chianti in basket-work jackets—ah, me, the days, the days that are no more!” Levin sighed in burlesque melancholy. But without that tongue-loosener, Cleve presently found himself telling them all about the Greenhouse Players, and some of his trials. He pulled up in sudden realization.

“I’m taking up your time, and talking a blue streak about myself into the bargain. Forgive me!”

“Time’s all I have since a beneficent government took away my means of livelihood—or as much as it could lay hands on,” Levin responded cheerfully. “And you needn’t worry about Larry. Associating with brainy boys like you is part of his job. It looks well—makes him very solid with the management. Hey, Larry? Ho, ha, ha!”

“It undoubtedly counteracts the effect of being seen with *you*!” said Symmes. He fixed his eyes on Cleve with a good deal of serious and thoughtful

interest as he said: "Tell me something more about these alterations. *Any* alteration, I suppose, would be heart-rending to an author; but have they wanted you to do anything gravely radical—anything that would involve a descent from ideals?"

"No. I suppose they realize that I wouldn't do it," said Cleve, perhaps a little curtly, coloring.

"Oh, I wasn't offensive, was I?" said the other quickly, in so disarming a way that Cleve's flare of resentment died down on the instant.

"No, no. I understand—"

"Larry's 'descent from ideals' connotes to my low-browed, man-in-the-street intellect commercialization," said Levin. "Hitting a popular note in the hope of making the thing pay, is that it? Is that what you won't do, Mr. Harrod?"

"That is what I won't do," Cleve said, half smiling in response to the others' half-smiles, behind which he perceived a certain sympathy, an interest as remote as possible from curiosity. "I've always kept out of that."

"No knuckling down for the sake of the bank balance, eh? No dishonest pandering to mob tastes. No bowing yourself in the house of Rimmon, in short," said Symmes, turning his thin, tired, lined face and deep-set eyes upon the younger man with a look in which liking and tolerance and regret were queerly mingled. "Bravo! But I'm thinking you must have had something of a scuffle to get along, with those principles nailed to the mast, Mr. Harrod."

"Well—yes. I've lived all kinds of ways, and done the first thing that came to hand," said Cleve, coloring again, again feeling that he was over confidential. "It doesn't take any particular heroism though."

"Every man, whatever his business or profession, has that same sort of problem put up to him, more than once," said Levin. "Will he be high-minded and scuffle, as Larry says, or will he take the dirty dollar and live easy? It's pretty hard sometimes——" He paused abruptly. They had one of those moments of communicative silence possible only, as it would seem, between men; then Levin spoke again. "Trouble is, as I look at it, the thing is pretty sure to be a boomerang. You think you can let down just once and never have to do it again. You're wrong." He shook his head gravely. "I've seen that in business. You let down once, and you're let down for good and all. You can't ever come back. You've lost something. It's like that old Mother Goose rhyme: all the king's horses and all the king's men can't set you up again."

"It's like Jekyll and Hyde," said Symmes.

"I don't know that I ever forecast all the consequences," said Cleve; "but that's what would naturally follow."

"Well, let's start a nation-wide movement to prevent everybody from letting down!" Levin suggested. "That's the universal method of accomplishing things nowadays—having a 'drive.'" He looked at Cleve with a sudden laugh. "Do you know that when you were telling about being at Heilbronner's, I thought naturally that you had taken that job to get material to put into some story? But now I have a hunch that it wasn't that at all."

"Not at all! I took it to get material to put into myself and keep body and soul together!" They all three laughed again, relieved to get the talk into a lighter vein.

The rehearsals continued with various ups and downs; but, on the whole, everything seemed to be

going fairly well, at least to Cleve's inexperienced view. He went up to Waldemar's studio at the artist's invitation to look over the designs for the settings and costumes which were now completed. It was in the studio district—the district of those who have arrived, that is—on Fifty-Seventh just a step from the park, a lofty, cool, majestic interior with a sky-light, stone-grey walls, flaming batik hangings, and the sketches for *In Arcady* ranged on easels all around among the pieces of armor and old brass and Italian pottery and the dim, beautiful lamps. A half-dozen favored acquaintances of the celebrity were already there; Waldemar's Japanese manservant circulated efficiently with a salver of little cups and cakes; the samovar was going in a corner by a screen—and in charge of it, Mrs. Gherardi.

Their eyes met across the room and she gave him a little nod, composed and smiling; Cleve thought his own bow must be the clumsiest ever performed by mortal man. It was nearly two years, time enough for that foolishness to have died and been decently interred, forgotten or resurrected only to laugh over; and by all reckoning, his present position was a handsome one, to be carried off with security and ease. Here he was, a rising young dramatist, with a brilliant future, and at the moment a work upon which nationally known artists like the Greenhouse Players and Waldemar himself were engaged; on the face of it he could have asked no greater kindness of the fates than to allow him to meet her in just this place, just this way. But the fates, who take pleasure in ironies, had further ordained that he should be beset by memories of the rain running on a low roof—of a blissful sense of isolation—of the brief, mad delight of touching her. He withdrew his eyes, recalling himself with reluct-

ant effort; a well-dressed woman was talking to him, gesticulating with a lorgnette in her smartly gloved hand, offering small, bright speeches like beads, and determinedly finding brightness in his replies or even in his silence, after the manner of her kind. Cleve had met her before—met her by the dozens, he said to himself—and knew that he need not trouble to attend to her. She drifted away after a while; two or three others came in; he got himself in hand and went over to the samovar.

Edith was in the act of yielding her post to another fashionable toilette, another facile tongue; she gave him her hand with her free, fearless grip, her straight look. "I'm very glad about all this," she said frankly, with a gesture that comprehended not only the studio and Waldemar's pictures, but by implication all Cleve's successes, past, present and to come.

"That's very kind of you. It's like you," Cleve managed to say shyly—but not more shyly than was his wont, perhaps; he never outgrew the boyish affliction.

"From Mr. Waldemar's designs, it looks as if the play must be one you once told me something about, do you remember?"

Did he remember? "Yes, it's the same, only with a different title."

"I hear Lisa St. John is to be in it?"

"Yes."

"She is charming. Are all the cast equally good?"

"I'm afraid they're better than the play."

Edith studied him for an instant of silence, thinking that he seemed older, and was, if anything, better looking; and that it was much more difficult to keep up this small talk than she had expected; some-

how she was not nearly so much mistress of herself and the situation as she was accustomed to be—as she had been on certain occasions in the past. In vexation she felt her color slowly rising under his gaze: Times were changed, she thought in a flash of ironic illumination; there was a vast difference between a nameless boy, little better than an upper servant in a hotel, and a well-known man of letters, a playwright, a celebrity. Absolutely no danger from the scandal-mongers now; her world would regard the acquaintance as one to be envied, instead of making it the theme of hilarious gossip!

“I hope I shall see you again,” she heard herself saying, in a stupor of amazement.

“If you mean——?” Cleve was beginning in a low voice—when mercifully for both of them, Mrs. Cook came up, somebody else came up, and the moment was over. If Cleve went home with his head in the clouds, Mrs. Gherardi as she departed in no pleased or self-satisfied temper, decided to keep hers firmly on her shoulders hereafter. Something about the young man, his romantic gifts, his stalwart good looks, or last and perhaps most potent of all, his infatuation for herself—something about him, whatever it was, seemed to impel her to follies that in retrospect alarmed and humiliated and finally angered her. After all that she had been through, seen, done, and had done to her, to entangle herself in this particular species of intrigue would be a pretty business, she thought with harsh mirth.

All this while there had been no word from *The Frame-Up*, but according to Flexner, whom Cleve heard of and met among the stage folk with increasing frequency, this silence was rather reassuring than otherwise. “He’s got a regular habit of holding your stuff, if it looks pretty good to him, for six

weeks or couple of months maybe, and then giving it another reading to make sure," said the press-agent—Mr. Flexner's official title, Cleve now understood—confidentially. "Ad likes to play safe, y'know—if there's any such thing as playing safe in the theatrical business, and don't look as if there was most of the time. But I wouldn't worry, if I was in your place." And sure enough, only a day or so later, the great man sent Cleve a message; he would see the author on Sunday.

It was not unlike the summons of royalty; and in fact when he went to the Delmar as commanded, and went around to the stage entrance, he was shown into a suite of rooms of truly royal gorgeousness. They occupied a floor to themselves up a flight of steps; passing, Cleve caught glimpses of the auditorium in dust-colored palls of sheeting; a Sabbath inertia possessed it, though elsewhere there was some activity of cleaning and repair-work, and it was a man in overalls, an electrician probably, coming up from the cellars with some tools and wire and insulating fixtures, who directed him to the regal retreat. Mr. Delmar's taste ran to purple velvet, French furniture of the most rococo period, vistas of mirrors; nymphs costumed—inadequately—in Pompadour fashions swam amongst frescoed clouds all over the ceilings, garlands of roses dropped from the cornice. There were marbles, bronzes, oil-paintings, imposing lines of shelves loaded with still more imposing regiments, brigades, army-corps of books. Never was seen such a bewildering profusion; the mind stood still before it, as in contemplating the multitude of the stars, and felt something of the same fatigue. It would have been a relief to see a single undecorated surface, an object without a duplicate. Cleve, as he waited in an ante-

chamber—he did not doubt Mr. Delmar called it that—before a mammoth stone mantelpiece upheld by straining satyrs, caught himself wondering that there was only a pair of massive wrought and gilded brass andirons instead of a dozen! An attendant who should have been a black eunuch with a turban and scimitar, Cleve thought with a grin, but who was, as a matter of fact, a charwoman in an ancient alapaca skirt that gaped at the placket, came presently mumbling an incantation which he took as leave to enter the Delmarian sanctum.

Mr. Delmar was profoundly busy writing at a wide, heavy, antique, oaken table spread with notebooks and printed books and loose papers and ink-stands and a green-shaded lamp and stacked manuscripts exactly as you may see them on the doctor's desk when the curtain goes up for the second act of that justly celebrated drama, *Doctor Griffith's Experiment*—by Adrian Delmar and Robinson Jones. Even the telephone, which figures so prominently in the same scene, was there. Cleve recognized the resemblance with another grin—which he very diplomatically kept to himself, however, grinning inwardly as it were; he wondered if the blotter, another conspicuously displayed property, was impregnated with the dread *essence of mandragora* like the lethal blotter in the play which brings about the doctor's own end. Mr. Delmar, after a nicely timed moment, raised his eyes.

“Ah, Mr. Harrod!” he exclaimed in his rich, rolling voice, and got up and shook hands most affably. “Have a chair! One instant, please, until I finish this!” And down he sat again to *Doctor Griffith's* table, plunging anew into work; it was most impressive.

When he came to the actual business of this meet-

ing, though, Mr. Delmar laid aside both the Oriental potentate and the stage hero styles, becoming a brisk, acute and practical man of affairs in the twinkling of an eye; and it may be said that in the last rôle he was much more natural and pleasing. He liked *The Frame-Up*; he considered that it had great possibilities. Of course Mr. Harrod must take into consideration, in making terms, that he was new and comparatively unknown, a beginner, in short—everybody must be a beginner at some time—Mr. Delmar did not forget that he himself had been a beginner once; now he might fairly claim to be an older soldier, not a better. In producing the play, he assumed all the risks, and they were very great, even with a play of the highest merit; the public was the most uncertain, the most incalculable element possible to deal with. Supposing a failure—for one must look on all sides—Mr. Harrod would sustain no loss; so far from that, there would accrue to him a certain prestige from having a play presented on Broadway. Delmar, on the contrary, would suffer both actually and intangibly; in other words, plain words, he would be out of pocket and reputation, too. However, let that pass! He was willing to chance it; he believed in the play. But in the circumstances, their—er—financial understanding must be based on these facts, etc., etc.

Cleve made it plain that he understood Mr. Delmar's position and his own. In fact, the terms proposed seemed to him most liberal; with all his artist's egoism, the young man was not disposed to set too high a valuation on his work; he had too sharp a sense of humor and proportion. And Delmar, to give honor where honor is due, was the very reverse of niggardly in all his dealings; his grandiose style expressed grandiose habits of mind.

For years he had been risking, losing, making, spending great sums of money, and all his thought and way of life were correspondingly large and fearless. There were some more compliments, some talk of contracts; of course no legal instruments could be executed on Sunday—"Though I daresay neither one of us feels any very powerful conscientious scruples," said Mr. Delmar with a smile. In truth, one glance at the theatrical gentleman's countenance would have led to the conjecture that he was not spiritually bound to observe any festival of the Christian creeds.

"But now before we go any further," he continued resonantly, addressing himself to the manuscript of *The Frame-Up*, "suppose we read this over together. You won't be alarmed or offended, I hope, Mr. Harrod, if I make some suggestions? Nothing radical, of course. The acted play is an astonishingly different thing from the written one, and experience has taught me how an audience can best be reached; and that's the main thing, after all, isn't it? Of what good is brilliant dialogue, if they don't get the point, eh? Above all, honesty and directness!" said Mr. Delmar, forcibly. "Plain, unmistakable speech coupled with, and helped out by plain, unmistakable action. Now let's get at it!"

They got at it; and Cleve in surprise found his apprehensions lessening from page to page. Delmar *was* an older soldier and Cleve was generous enough to acknowledge him a better one in everything that had to do with stage effect, at any rate. He pointed out—with careful tact and kindness—sundry contradictions and repetitions that must be pruned away, sundry gaps that needed piecing out or bridging over, sundry pauses or hitches in the

narrative, awkward odds and ends that Cleve himself would never have recognized unless in actual presentation. He had ideas, facility, invention, a fund of technical information that was well-nigh bottomless. "Give her a better exit!" "You ought to re-write that entrance!" were recurrent injunctions. "Young man," he said with solemnity, "you can't be too particular about how you get your people on and off. It's as important as anything that happens between times!"

This was when they had gone through the first act, and Cleve was completing his notes of the other's suggestions. Reviewing them, he was somewhat taken aback to discover that, slight as they had seemed severally, in sum they imparted a wholly different tone, a different atmosphere to the play; the characters by imperceptible degrees had ceased to be the characters he had tried to draw; the social background he indicated, or had meant to indicate, had become in some unbelievable way, at once commonplace and unfamiliar. He confusedly perceived that while the changes might be for the better, they must inevitably affect the future course of the comedy; in good art, the events he had imagined could not logically result from these altered premises. They approximated that minute inaccuracy in a mathematical calculation which, breeding error after error, will attain monstrous proportions.

"Well, that's *that!*!" Delmar said, rubbing his hands with jovial satisfaction. "For the time being, at least," he added, and Cleve's anxieties momentarily subsided; after all, this tinkering was more or less experimental, like Waldemar's. "There may be weeks of work before us yet," Delmar went on to say. "Plays, as a matter of fact, are built, not written."

Cleve wondered if *Othello* and *The Rivals* were examples of this method of construction; but not considering himself eligible to a place in such high company, even as a dog among kings, he held his peace, listening respectfully.

"I mean the completed work in all its details. Thoroughness is the keynote, Mr. Harrod. Thoroughness and the illusion of reality—so far as practicable, reality itself. If your scene is laid in a foreign country, real natives of that country—for France, real Frenchmen, Germany—well, perhaps I had better say *Italy*, the public doesn't want to hear anything about Germany nowadays—for Italy, real Italians, to furnish your—er—ensemble," said Mr. Delmar in a learned manner. "Real books on your shelves, real flowers in the vases—"

"Real flap-jacks fried on a real griddle and a real stove," Cleve contributed gravely. "I remember what a hit that made in the kitchen scene in *Single Standards*."

"Ah—yes—*Single Standards*—yes," said the great man, glancing rather sharply into his face. The fact was that this extreme devotion to realism had moved the press and public to some good-natured chaffing; the acting of the flap-jacks, it was said, excelled that of anyone else in the cast; they were perfect! Mr. Delmar turned to Act II in some haste. "Now in this and your next act—the last as it now stands, but we may expand it to four acts," said he warily, "there is a certain amount of strengthening needed. I made a note or two—" Here he ruffled the pages and came to his note on an inserted slip of paper which he read over studiously. "Um—yes—" He read again, and laid the manuscript aside, facing around to Cleve, and fixing upon him a compelling eye. "You have there

a very great opportunity, Mr. Harrod, but, if you will pardon my saying so, you have not made the most of it. You imagined a strong situation—about the strongest known to the stage—and then you seem to have shied off, so to speak, from—er—from carrying it to its logical conclusion. You seem to have been overcome by—well, shall I say reticence? You evidently shrink from the—er—the *apparent* grossness—for it is but *apparent*—of plain words, and plain, natural, *human* behavior. But in art, Mr. Harrod," said Delmar impressively; "in art there can be no such thing as modesty, in the ordinary acceptance of the word. In such scenes, such moments as you have here conceived," he proceeded even more impressively, tapping the manuscript; "the fundamental passions of men and women rise to the surface, and—er—find expression in their every speech and action. It may be brutal, it may be repellent, but it is *real*. It is *life* and must be reproduced faithfully."

Cleve stared, dumbfounded. He believed that he knew by heart every line the characters in *The Frame-Up* were to utter, every movement they were to make; but now he racked his memory in vain to identify Delmar's "strong situation." And what was all this talk about reticence, art, modesty? He did not know what the other was driving at, and showed it so unmistakably that Delmar himself was plainly perplexed for an instant; then he looked incredulous, then smiled.

"Come now, you know what I mean? You know the scene? After all the trouble you must have had to keep within the bounds of old-fashioned Victorian propriety?"

"I'm afraid that part must be badly done—worse even than the rest of it," Cleve said in honest con-

cern. "I must have given an impression totally different from what I intended to give——"

"No, no, nothing of the sort!" Delmar cried out in a quick and humane effort to reassure him. "On the contrary! It's well planned and well executed except in that one particular. You simply didn't realize the possibilities of the situation you had created, or else you—er—you avoided the issue, so to speak. That was perfectly natural for a young playwright. Now, if you don't mind," he interpolated with his stressed and punctilious courtesy—"if you don't mind, let us consider this main scene."

"With all my heart! I'm not sure what scene you mean," said Cleve, still in a fog of worry and futile conjecture.

Mr. Delmar became didactic. "Here," said he, raising his forefinger, "here you have a young woman who has started a flirtation with the chauffeur; there are some foolish notes written, some spooning by moonlight, and so on. Then here in Act Two, at one of their meetings, he tries to get her to elope with him. Well——" Delmar paused, eyeing Cleve expectantly.

"Well?" Cleve echoed, after another puzzled moment.

"Well, don't you see what a chance you have there? That young man isn't going to mince matters, Mr. Harrod. He won't be mealy-mouthed. He'll let her know pretty plainly what he wants. He'll make her understand that she's in his power and that if they can find a magistrate or a minister to marry them, well and good! But if not, he's not going to—er—wait for formalities. Come now, you know very well that's what he'd do," said Delmar persuasively. "I take it you shrank from saying it

in so many words, on account of this—this mistaken—er—delicacy.”

After a silence, Cleve said laboriously, “I never thought of him in—in that light, Mr. Delmar. My idea was that he was a decent man, decently in love.”

The other made a little deprecatory gesture. “But a young man—even a young man of good principles—would in the circumstances yield to the promptings of passion.”

“Would he?” said Cleve.

Delmar bore his hard gaze in unmoved complacency. “We aren’t any of us saints,” he observed; philosophically: “The audience realizes that fact. They know the natural outcome of that scene would be in accordance with my—er—my suggestions. The average audience of today I have found surprisingly quick to detect falsities—false sentiment—false conceptions of character—false art——”

“You ought to know,” said Cleve drily.

“I do know, Mr. Harrod. I know what the public wants. It wants *life*, real, pulsating, vital. Real men and women with real passions——”

“Real flap-jacks and real griddles,” Cleve murmured.

“This is not a time for flippancy,” said Delmar with dignity, yet still patient, still tolerant of the other’s youth, inexperience and temperament. “I am giving you the result of close and I hope intelligent observation. The public nowadays wants the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. It would have shocked our ancestors, but today an audience is not shocked by *anything*——”

“Apparently not!”

“Anything that is true and truly stated about the relations of the sexes. The public knows that noth-

ing is more immodest than too much modesty!" said Mr. Delmar epigrammatically. "It wants the electricity, it wants the thrill of genuine passion—something common to us all put into common words we cannot mistake, exhibited in actions whose significance we cannot fail to grasp. That is real life and real art; the public demands it. That's what you've missed in this scene; that's what you could put into it if you would—er—break through this extraordinary—er—reticence—which, again pardon me!—is only a form of prudery."

Cleve listened to this orotund exposition of the public's wants, as Mr. Delmar conceived them, with a kind of unwilling admiration for the man. Delmar was so unconscious a hypocrite; he was so solemnly convinced of the worth and weight of his deliverances than which nothing more stale and shop-worn in the way of rhetoric was ever uttered since men first began to deceive themselves with words; he exploited the vulgar and the salacious with so splendid a gesture, serving art with his whole soul—and never forgetting the box-office! There was something not far from pathetic in his relish for this glorified clap-trap; and contrary to accepted beliefs about men of his race, he was not mercenary; he only possessed to the full their fatal disposition to admire the wrong thing.

After a short silence, Cleve said: "If I understand you, Mr. Delmar, what you recommend me to do is to make this scene erotically suggestive; there must be open indecency, or indecencies hinted at in what they say and do—"

"Mr. Harrod, nothing indecent has ever been permitted on my stage," said the other, still dignified, but still humanely making allowances. His superior

self-command was exasperating! "I want you to be true to life, that is all."

"I won't do it," said Cleve, trying, without great success, to emulate his moderation.

"My dear Mr. Harrod——!"

"I will not do it," Cleve repeated. He got up trembling with the effort to keep his temper. "The play is nothing much. If it never sees the light, there's no great loss to anybody. But it is clean. I will not befoul it. If your audiences like that sort of thing, write it for them yourself. You are much better equipped than I am."

Delmar's forbearance was proof even against that! He rose, too, but without any violence of movement, and spoke gently. "My dear young man, don't, don't get angry and fling off this way, and waste your chances! Chances don't come so often, even to genius like yours. All you writers are touchy; your work is your child, your flesh and blood; you can't bear to see it handled by a stranger. That's not only natural, it's right. Oh, I know you all so well, so well!" he said, half sighing, half smiling at Cleve's fiery face. "Sit down again, and let's go into this a little further."

Cleve looked down at him, sensing the obdurate pertinacity that has kept Delmar's race alive and made it a factor in the world's history through two thousand years of determined effort on the part of Christianity to destroy it, that has preserved it in its original integrity after countless changes of dwell-place amongst all the nations of the earth. He saw, too, that argument was unavailing against that iron incapacity to understand; nothing but flat denial would serve.

"It's no use, Mr. Delmar. I can't do what you

want. I'd despise myself and you and your public," he said. "Give me the manuscript and let me go."

"Oh, this is too bad! But if you *will* have it so——!" said Delmar, sighing again. "You are going to regret this on sober second thought, Mr. Harrod. And if you do—— Why, put that stubborn pride in your pocket, and come to see me again! I shall be glad to discuss this with you another time," he assured Cleve magnanimously.

CHAPTER V

CLEVE went home not in the best of tempers with himself. Not, indeed, that he regretted his refusal to fall in with Delmar's plans, but rather the manner of it. The older man—and he was old enough to be Cleve's father—had been so kind, so considerate, so generous; he had come off so much the best, as far as self-control and civility went, in the encounter. No matter how often and with what strength of conviction Cleve assured himself that the other's talk was nothing but showy hokum glossing over an intention fundamentally cheap and ignoble, that he himself had chosen to be on the side of the angels, clean-minded and clean-handed—notwithstanding these arguments, Mr. Harrod found the figure he had cut something less than heroic. Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just!—but he ought not to conduct it in quite such a hammer-and-tongs fashion. When all was said, Delmar was no worse than nine out of every ten men in his profession, probably a good deal better. Considering the so-called "sex" plays and "sex" talk that appeared to be in reigning vogue on the stage, it was more than likely that other managers or producers would have required the same sort of changes made, and without nearly the deference to good taste which Delmar almost always displayed. *He* would not have insisted on anything barefacedly low, he would have been pleased with a species of discreet nastiness, Cleve thought not without amusement.

Sophy, running to the door at the most remote sound of his step, and craning over the stair-rail, recognized the parcel of *Frame-Up* manuscript under his arm, and when he reached their landing looked with mute and foreboding inquiry. Cleve shok his head at her with a smile. "Cheer up! It's a pipe, a frost, a blow-out, a fizzle, a false alarm!" said he gaily. In fact, the defeat, so to call it, had nowise disheartened him; what was a play more or less, a theatrical manager more or less, a disappointment more or less? It was all in the day's work. One had to stand up to rebuffs and failures in every career, to live through all weathers, fair and foul. He was in such good luck with *Three Woodl-In Arcady* (talk about changes, there was a change, confound 'em!) that, in conscience, he should not complain. One can't have everything to suit, all the time.

"You mean that that Mr. Delmar isn't going to take it, after all? Why? What did he say was the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! We just couldn't agree, that's all."

"Well, he's a mean old thing. And I bet he don't know anything anyhow!" said Sophy indignantly. "He'll be mad when somebody else gets it and it has a big run. *Then* he'll wish he had!" But, spite of these brave prognostications, her face clouded. "Only—what'll we do, Cleve?"

"Why, charge it off to profit and loss!" said Cleve light-heartedly, slapping the bundle down on his table. "Just stop thinking about it, that's what we'll do. Where's my pipe?"

"Well, aren't you going to try somebody else?"

"Oh, yes, after a while. No more Delmar, though. Never again!" Cleve asserted, vigorously, rummag-

ing among the papers, getting ready for work. It would have been an arrant waste of time to go into the details of the Delmar interview with Sophy; she was a dear little thing who would subscribe loyally to everything he said without understanding a word of it. Her unreasoned devotion touched him always, sometimes it even soothed; but what he needed in this instance was intelligent sympathy; and it would have been as hopeless to attempt to explain his scruples and his standards to her as to Delmar himself.

"Why? Didn't you like him?" she asked timidly, and rather precipitately, seeing his preparations and anxious to edge the question in before he got to work; she never, *never* interrupted Mr. Harrod when he was writing, she would have told you, rigidly.

"Oh, he was all right. Don't ask me any more questions now, dearest. I'm too busy to talk, you know."

Sophy crept away soundlessly. If she cried a little all by herself in the kitchenette, the tears rolling down saltily into her mouth until she mopped them off with a corner of the bungalow apron, or the tea-towel, or whatever rag was handiest, Cleve never knew it. Sometimes she wished with a dreadful feeling of guilt that he didn't write, but had some nice business and went to an office every day like other husbands. This way he was at home most of the time and that was lovely, of course, because she never worried over what might be happening to him; but he hardly ever had a minute to talk to her. Even when he wasn't writing, they didn't talk much. Often and *often*, when she started to tell him something, some little thing that she had seen when she was out marketing, you know, things like that, often

and *often* she would stop because she saw Cleve wasn't listening. He looked as if he was thinking up some story—*composing* it, you know. She guessed all of 'em did that way—writers, you know. They didn't only compose just when they were sitting down at the typewriter, they did it any old time; or Cleve did, anyhow. It made it so that even with him right there, there were times and times when she was lonesome. Not that she wanted to go out anywhere, like to a movie or cabaret or anything; it would be nice, of course, and a person did get kind of tired staying in the same three rooms all the time just cleaning and cooking, and it wasn't a real pretty place anyhow; you couldn't make it pretty without any lace curtains or pictures or fancy cushions or anything. But she didn't mind, at any rate, she wasn't going to be mean and fuss and nag, and it cost like everything to go out. Anyway that, wasn't what was the matter. She was just lonesome for Cleve to talk to her. But she never let him see it; she didn't mean to be that kind of a whine-y, mope-y wife!

Thus Sophy in private; for she had no confidantes. Her status as the wife of a writer, though nobody knew what he wrote or indeed exactly what the activities of a writer were, automatically separated her from the rest of the apartment-house ladies, wives of boss carpenters and mechanics, clerks and minor tradesmen who besides, as Sophy herself would have said did not "appeal to her." They were mostly older, had been married much longer and had families of children about whom they talked tirelessly to the exclusion of every other topic except that of the neighbors' and janitors' children. Sophy was naturally out of these sociabilities; for that matter, certain of her chorus-girl experiences

had taught her that the part of prudence was to avoid too close intimacy. She heard from George regularly, and at intervals from Miriam. "All the folks here doing fine. Keep us posted," the former wrote, "this old place is just about the same. I keep on just about the same. Would like to locate in the States some time, but seems like I can't hardly leave Pa and Ma Beales and Miriam don't feel like she would want to either, though they both of them say go whenever we feel like we are ready to strike out for ourselves. As long as I aint ever said anything before, so you didnt know it was coming I expect this about Miriam and self will kind of give you a jolt—"

It did! Sophy went to Cleve with round eyes of excitement. "What do you think? Miriam and George are going to get married!"

"You don't say so!"

They sat down together over the letter. "It aint happened so very long. We got engaged a week Sunday," wrote honest George. Cleve could see him writing, doubled up over the desk, with firmly compressed lips, the slow pen travelling laboriously. "Of course it's been kind of coming on. I was all set to ask her over and over agane, only she would kind of ditch me every time, like girls do. But finely I got her nailed. Shees looking over my shoulder and she says tell you it aint so and this aint any way to talk anyway. I guess Cleve and you know though.

" . . . We aim to have our own hotel and run it our own selves some day. We feel like we was pretty well fixed all but the money which we got to save up, her knowing all about the office and me the eats end of it. I'll say it will be some hotel when we get good and going. You and Cleve got to come and stay with us summers. We was figuring on

the Catskills or maybe Berkshires and call it the Mountain House.

“Well, my love and keep well and regards to Cleve and tell him I’ll name my first Cleveland H. Tarvey if heel come back with George T. Harrod——”

Sophy shrieked. “*Oh!*” and snatched the letter away from under Cleve’s eyes. “*Oh!* I do think men are just *awful!* The *ideal!*”

“Why, it’s all right. He’s—he’s just feeling happy, you know,” said Cleve, laughing awkwardly, a little red in the face himself, though not to match the Union Jack colors that Sophy hung out. “I’m going to write and tell him he’s *on!* It’s a bargain——”

“*Cleve!*” She clapped a hand over his mouth, laughing too, shamefacedly.

Meanwhile *In Arcady* advanced or, to be accurate, hitched along, in such fashion that it was sometimes doubtful whether it was going at all, or in what direction, forward or back! Cleve supposed that the preparation of all plays must be attended by the same slowness, uncertainty and confusion, with orders eternally clashing, actors eternally coming and going, suspensions, sicknesses, quarrels, accidents, set-backs innumerable. There must always arrive a stage of development when *everything* seems to be at a standstill with chaos come again, he concluded. How could it be otherwise with so many people, all of them sharing in some degree the artistic temperament, high-strung and mercurial—or having that reputation, at any rate? There were times when a suspicion visited him that the heads of the Greenhouse aggregation were not thoroughly competent to handle this difficult crew; Wallace, for one, was too occupied with the business problems

incidental to any enterprise. They seemed to have been unofficially given over to him by some higher powers, and after the first fortnight or so, he was seldom to be found about the theatre. Ahrends and Kraus were continually at loggerheads with each other or the actors; there were factions and cabals on all sides; Cleve himself was appealed to more than once to adjust the differences or plead with recalcitrants; it was a miracle that anything got done, he thought. Waldemar had tired of it long ere this; moreover, his was the one and only piece of work completed and satisfactory to all parties, so that he was justified in packing up and going to Santa Barbara for a holiday—or to enter into negotiations with some of the motion-picture magnates, as it was rumored—after the designs had been delivered. The carpenters and scene-painters were at work on them, so Cleve understood from Mr. Wallace who had let the contracts, and so he told Mr. Morris Flexner upon the latter's casual inquiry.

“Uh-huh. Well, you’re likely to strike a snag any time,” he commented in a philosophical and not too optimistic vein; and some associated thought probably prompted him to add: “You and Delmar didn’t shake down together after all, hey?”

“I don’t remember saying so to anybody,” said Cleve, stiffly. But instead of accepting this scarcely veiled suggestion to mind his own business, and far from being affronted or put out of countenance by it, Mr. Flexner looked at him grinningly and drew down his left eyelid.

“Just what was the trouble anyway?” he asked. “That was good stuff you had. It would have gone great with Howard Langdon playing the lead; Solly wanted it for him, I know. What did you split on?

Think Solly was bossing you too much? Got your back up? Why, pshaw, somebody's got to be the boss, ain't they?"

Cleve's dignity gave way, not only before the other's harmless and essentially friendly impudence, but to the writer's curiosity, his inherent desire to find out what the other half is thinking about in addition to how it lives. "*Solly?* Who d'you mean, *Solly?*" said he, amiably enough this time, and in the easy colloquial style Mr. Flexner himself employed. "Not Mr. Delmar? You don't call *him* Solly?"

"Why not? That's his name," said Flexner, grinning again. "He was *knee* Hirshberg—Solly Hirshberg."

Cleve ejaculated in surprise; he had heard many tales about the impressario, but not this particular tale. And in view of Mr. Delmar's physical characteristics, it was not easy to understand why, having been born Hirschberg, he had not been resigned to staying Hirschberg. The rose by any other name will smell as sweet. "Hirschberg! But what did he change it for?"

"Adrian Delmar sounds better, don't it?" retorted Flexner.

Indubitably it did! And though Flexner devoutly revered and admired Delmar, it was apparent from the freedom of his speech that no man is a hero to his press-agent. "Solly's all right even if he does like to be the great I-am," said he. "He's earned it. He's a big somebody—the biggest in his line in this burg. And that's saying something. You can't beat Broadway easy. I've been all over—London, Paris, the whole show—and I haven't ever seen New York beat yet." He urged Cleve with visible sincerity to—"fix this thing up with Delmar," expressing a

no less sincere regret at the young man's uncompromising refusal.

"I'm so busy here at the Greenhouse that I couldn't give proper attention to the other anyhow. Both plays would suffer," Cleve said rather loftily, to put an end to the argument. And put an end it did, for Flexner gave him an odd, rather disturbing penetrating and humorous look, and walked off with scarcely another word. Cleve realized too late with a little annoyance, a little acid amusement that he had taken himself over-seriously, betraying a feeling of importance that could not fail to entertain Flexner hugely. For, in the long run, what were Cleveland Harrod and his prize-play and the Greenhouse Players to Broadway? Fifty theatres on the famous thoroughfare were crowded nightly; a dozen plays by known men, not obscure, unheralded newcomers, were launched every week, and a dozen withdrawn. Who could count up the struggles and attempts and failures and successes Flexner had witnessed? Not even he himself; they were as the sands of the seashore in number. Cleve resolved he would not again give Delmar's lieutenant—who would certainly pass the joke on to Delmar!—or anybody else occasion for merriment by that naïve and pompous self-assertion, not if he knew it, at any rate.

Accordingly he kept clear of *In Arcady* altogether, refusing to be drawn out, even by Cook, who always had a good many apparently artless questions to ask when they met. "I know you!" Cleve warned him at last. "You want to start me talking about the play or about myself. I know you! Consider yourself foiled!"

Cook had the grace to laugh. "The pot called the kettle black!" he said. "Don't you do the very same

thing yourself? Of course I cannot persuade you of it, but I am genuinely interested in the *Woodland Scenes*. I've wanted from that first reading to see it on the stage. Your opening has been postponed until after Easter, I hear. Mrs. Cook and I will be among some woodland scenes of our own by that time; we always go down to the country early, you know. And by the way, when this rush is over and the play has settled down to the longest run on record—I hope—perhaps you and Mrs. Harrod will come to us for a week? The place is lovely in April. We've been planning to have you. There will be just ourselves and one or two others—very quiet. My wife doesn't like big house parties."

Cleve accepted the invitation as cordially as it was given, suppressing a gnawing desire to know if Mrs. Gherardi was to be of the "others." It would have been a natural question; and moreover a natural thing for the Cooks to have invited her, seeing that young Mr. and Mrs. Harrod knew hardly anybody else in the city. But a humiliating anxiety withheld him; he was afraid of his own self-consciousness, and more afraid still of the little man's innocent eye-glasses, through which Marshall saw so much and so sharply.

Believing that he knew every thought in Sophy's head, he was wholly unprepared for the reception she gave the news, and taken aback in proportion. "Well, we don't have to go just because we're asked. We can get out of it somehow," she said, after a frowning moment.

"But, Sophy—! I told him we would."

"Oh, well, I can pretend to be sick or something," said Sophy, competently.

Cleve stared at her in astonishment. Her exhibi-

tion of the feminine facility at small deceits did not surprise him, though he knew her to be honesty itself. All women were experts in the white-lie line; it was to be expected. What he could not comprehend was her indifference—her more than indifference, her evident aversion to the glittering prospect of a week with the Cooks—gardens, automobile-rides, absolutely nothing to do! Once more the haunting, the debasing apprehension chilled him; but she could not envisage the possibility of Mrs. Gherardi; Cleve turned away the idea in a kind of fury. It seemed as if conscience would make a coward of him the rest of his life; Sophy could not know or suspect anything about himself and Mrs. Gherardi; there was nothing to know, nothing to suspect. “Why, don’t you *want* to go?” he asked—and for all his tranquilizing arguments awaited her answer in cringing uneasiness.

“Oh, Cleve, you *know* I haven’t got anything to wear!” All at once Sophy broke down, hastily turning her back on him, making a pretense of dusting, straightening the bureau drawers, or what-not, with nervous motions, her eyes blurring. Her most valiant endeavor could not keep back a sniff. “I don’t care the least bit about going anyhow. I’ve got *plenty* of clothes for here. It doesn’t make a bit of difference. I’m not crazy about visiting Mrs. Cook; we couldn’t turn round and ask her back, so what’s the use?”

Cleve was ashamed of his own relief. “Is that all? I thought—I—that is, I couldn’t imagine—” He instinctively resorted to action that bettered any words, drawing her down onto his lap, cuddling her poor little wet face with the tears that *would* come in spite of her, against his shoulder. “Why, Sophy,

I didn't know your clothes weren't all right. You always look so pretty I never think about what you have on. What's the matter with them?"

"Nothing—there isn't a thing the matter, only they wouldn't do for Mrs. Cook's place, you know, Cleve. They ain't the right kind."

"But, honey, you don't want to dress like Mrs. Cook?"

"My goodness, no! That old lady! She's forty if she's a minute. It's not that, you know, Cleve, it's just—well, I couldn't go, with what I got to wear, that's all. It don't make any difference, I don't care about going anyhow, Cleve, honest," Sophy declared; it was half the truth; at the moment she was content merely to lie in Cleve's big arms, against his breast. She wanted nothing more.

"Well, what kind of clothes would be right? What would you have to have?"

"Oh, I couldn't get 'em. They cost awfully—"

"Bosh! You go and get whatever you want."

"Oh, Cleve, can I?"

"Of course you can. Just be ordinarily careful, that's all." He moved her gently to sit up, and laughed to see her great blue eyes bright with incredulous delight and admiration and worship. Her implicit faith, her very dependence caressed and supported his self-respect; he felt strong, able, conquering. Of course he would give her everything, all the foolish, pretty trash she craved, poor little Sophy! Sweet, self-denying, uncomplaining little thing! "You ought to have told me before," he said seriously.

"Well, I was just bound and determined not to nag you. I've seen enough of those hateful, extravagant wives in the picture-shows and stories, you know. I'm not going to be like *them!*" said Sophy

with firmness. "I wouldn't ever have said one word if this hadn't of come up. I—I kind of couldn't help this."

"Well, another time, you must tell me. I don't think of things like that by myself, you know."

"You sure don't!" said Sophy, surveying his old suit with strong disfavor. "You'd ought to get yourself something new, too, Cleve. When they have the play you'll likely have to go out in front the curtain and make a speech, you know, and you ain't got a thing fit to be seen in!"

"Well, I'll see about it," Cleve promised her, smiling a little fatuously, perhaps. He had often dreamed of the moment, the rainbow moment, when he must go out in front of the curtain and make a speech.

CHAPTER VI

SPRING came on with the prudence it very often displays on our North Atlantic coasts, dressing the landscape with the steady and dependable bloom that rouses the envious ire of gardeners farther inland who must bear with the whims of a more emotional climate. Not all at once, but by degrees, warily and deliberately, the trees in the park put forth, the ivy greened on church façades, the window-boxes of the Avenue filled first with jonquils, then with hyacinths. Other windows, of milliners and smart shops, set up a brisk competition; there began to be Spring openings, automobile shows, flower-shows. The caretaker at Eversofar reported a list half a yard long of repairs to the roofs, plumbing, garden walls, walks and fountain basins, and of new shrubs and seeds requisitioned by the landscape artist. Mr. Waldemar got back from California where the season was over; innumerable theatrical companies came in from the road, disbanded, started out; flocks of little girls made their first communion; the moving van and the hurdy-gurdy appeared; and Mrs. Gherardi sent for her saddle horse.

She rode by herself in the park, disdaining grooms and riding masters, not unreasonably, for she had been used to horses since she was a child of ten, and was quite fearless and confident of her ability to manage anything that went on four legs. Edith could have tightened a girth, or rubbed her beast down and stabled him, for that matter; she had per-

formed those offices more than once for her pony years ago at the country place in Maine where the family spent their summers. The youthful Miss Rudd had a turn for athletics and the rugged outdoors, and was wont to spend her days, to the scandal of her mother and governess, among fishermen, sailors, farmers, stable-hands, rather than in the drawing room. This spring her slender, active figure in a habit of Bond Street cloth and cut, soon became a familiar sight careering along the bridle-paths in company with a Kentucky gentleman of lengthy pedigree and somewhat quick temper who had cost her two thousand dollars at the Madison Square Show. All the mounted policemen knew her and the satiny brown coat of Prince Rollo and his habit of describing figure eights, mainly on his hind legs, with a tremendous commotion of hoofs and gravel, when encountering a motorcycle. The first time this occurred, Officer 37 gallantly came rushing to the rescue, only to find Rollo subdued and in some measure reassured though still rolling an apprehensive eye, and the lady firm in the saddle with a firm hand on the reins, smiling.

"I'm all right, thank you. He just got a little excited," she said.

The policeman looked at her and at her mount with admiration. "That's a great little horse ye've got—and by the same token, it's yourself that can handle him, miss," said he, a piece of familiarity whereat Mrs. Gherardi only laughed. She always recognized 37 afterwards, nodding to him when they passed, and Mrs. 37 was not altogether pleased to hear the tales of the beautiful Amazon that her man injudiciously brought home. They would have made Edith laugh again; beautiful, indeed!

She rode so early that she seldom met an acquaint-

ance, but one Sunday morning, walking Rollo along a lane between high, rocky banks where the spring had made a few preliminary sketches with branches of forsythia arching and drooping hung with delicate yellow tassels, she caught a disturbing glimpse of some one who was perhaps neither friend nor acquaintance, pacing the path alongside. Rollo halted abruptly with an effect of surprise, and in a second Edith realized that she must have involuntarily drawn rein. For the soul of her she could not decide whether to go and pass without looking, or to pass and bow, or to turn back and solve the difficulty by running away from it. Another second and it was too late; Cleve had heard the measured rhythm of the horse's advance and the creaking of stirrup leather; he turned at their abrupt cessation.

"Good-morning!" said Edith in her pleasant, distinct voice, unfalteringly, meeting his eye.

"Mrs. Gherardi! How do you do!"

It was as simple as that! So each one felt with intermingled relief and self-contempt. What under Heaven was there to be afraid of? Here they were, a perfectly sane, sophisticated (above all, sophisticated!) man and woman, whose lives now seemed to be laid out for them by circumstance, planned to a conclusion, not to be again meddled with or put to the test of crazy impulses; no reason why they should not frankly and collectedly enjoy the companionship, like two congenial men.

"You like to ride? But, of course! You take naturally to all the outdoor sports."

"Oh, indoor, too, Mr. Harrod. I'm not so bad at pool, am I?"

They both began to laugh, in rather an excited, boy-and-girl fashion at the recollection of the St. Leon lounge, that rattle-trap old pool-table, the

eccentric shots and scores it was possible to make by chance. Rollo under compulsion stood, fidgetting a little, doubtless wondering within his equine mind what all this tomfoolery of laughter and crossing glances was about and whither it tended? Not stablewards and oatwards, oh, Rollo, that was certain!

"Do you know, I should have thought you would ride cross-saddle? Not for safety, but—well—"

"I do sometimes, hunting—if there are very stiff jumps, you know. But people, women, that is—keep telling me I look so mannish, I really don't like it. Oh, laugh, if you choose, I knew you would."

"A woman in man's clothes never looks mannish at all!" Cleve told her with amusement. "Sometimes like a charming boy, perhaps—" And Rollo moved his feet impatiently, snorting; the stable and dinner were getting farther off every minute.

However, there was only a little more talk. It was revealed that she rode early, he walked early these mornings for the sense of freshness and spring in the air. How were the rehearsals going? Oh, well enough; just now they would be nothing but a jumble, tedious and incomprehensible to an outsider, but when they got a little further along if she would like to come and look on for a while some day—?

"Would I *like* it! Oh, Mr. Harrod! It would be delightful—"

"Well, not so delightful as you think. An hour of it will be about all you can stand," he warned her. "It's *work*, you know, and gets to be pretty monotonous."

"No matter! I shall be the most bitterly envied woman in my whole circle! I shall go around, giving myself such airs, boasting my knowledge of

plays and play-producing, and playwrights, *the Mr. Harrod*—”

“Don’t laugh at me!” said Cleve, with more emphasis than he was aware, very likely. The brown gelding may have noticed a sudden pause; he interpreted Edith’s unconscious twitch on the reins to suit his own tastes and began to move on; and they called out hasty good-byes and don’t forgets and whatever tags of conventional leave-taking phrases came into their heads. “I ought to have asked after his wife. It would have looked better,” Edith said to herself, half a mile away. “I forgot all about her!”

Nothing could have been more unpremeditated than the meeting; and as for what passed at it, what was said and done on both sides, the whole world, Sophy included, might have looked on and listened without embarrassment. Nevertheless, Cleve did not speak of it at home; and if on subsequent occasions, he chanced upon Mrs. Gherardi in the same, casual, unexpected style, riding or sometimes walking in the park, he did not speak of them either. It did not happen so very often, after all, perhaps not more than half a dozen times; and Cleve would have sworn on a stack of Bibles and believed his own oath that the later encounters were as innocent of evil, thought or spoken, as the first. Indeed, it was the truth that neither he nor Edith Gherardi would intentionally stoop to cheap intrigue. Their talk was always of the present, of *In Arcady*, of the Delmar disappointment, about which Cleve had never spoken a word to another soul! But first and last, he told her all about himself as he had once before in that time that neither of them dared to refer to directly; and Edith, who would not have had much patience, it is to be feared, with another

man's egoism, listened to the dreams and hopes and tragic, vain-glorious stuff like any Griselda. It happened to be the last time they met—the forsythia were all gone by, and lilacs were setting buds—that she spoke of seeing him at the Cooks'.

"The second week in May, isn't it? That's what Bessie Cook told me, and I'm sure she said something about your being there. After your play has come out?"

"Yes, the second week in May," Cleve echoed, somehow startled, obscurely dismayed to remember that they were at the third week of April already. Next Sunday would be Palm Sunday; and *In Arcady* seemed to be as far from presentation as ever.

Alas, not for much longer was his uneasiness to be formless! The shadows were fast collecting into substance of dire aspect. To lay aside these handsome metaphors, it began to look as if what had happened to the *Boardwalk Belles* of unwholesome memory was about to happen to the Greenhouse Players; rain visits the just and unjust alike. Cleve desperately closed his eyes against the signs; he said nothing to Sophy in fear that, schooled by ancient experience, she would recognize them. She was so happily preoccupied nowadays, going about the flat or on her errands with a thoughtful gaiety that he could not bear to cloud; and after all, the omens might mislead, his suspicions might be groundless.

But one melancholy day the storm burst, the blow fell. The accompanying crashing and smashing were too familiar to the stage world to attract a great deal of attention; somebody's balloon is forever exploding on Broadway; and the Greenhouse venture Broadway had regarded from the first as

even more fragile and gaseous than the run of balloons. "These highbrows—Wallace and the rest of his crowd—they got the idea that good business isn't Art," Mr. Morris Flexner observed, dispassionately. "What gets me is, why don't they stick to Art then, and let the other ride? As a matter of fact they all do in the end. They go broke mixing up Art and business, and then some fellow that thinks Shakespeare writes for the movies comes along and takes hold of the pieces and tinkers 'em up so they'll go, and runs along on business principles and makes a pot of money! Same theatre, same actors, same play even, same everything, only a different man in the office that knows two and two won't add up to five. Minute one of the Art boys gets through filing the petition in bankruptcy, you'll hear of him 'conferring' with Abe Rosenbaum or Lewissohn or somebody, and next thing you know they've leased the house and brought out *The Fly in the Molasses* or whatever it was that this Art guy got stuck with, and it's playing to capacity! Thing is, why didn't he begin with Abe in the beginning? Looks like they all had to go through the other same as measles or getting vaccinated," said Mr. Flexner, speculatively. "This Harrod, for instance, the one that was going to be such a loud noise, what's become of him? Ask of the winds that far away with the fragments strewed the sea—when the Greenhouse blew up, y'know. I saw Waldemar the other day; he's suing to recover on some designs he made for 'em."

Where was Cleve, to be sure? The hardest moment of his life was that when he had to carry home the heavy news; all the days of haggling and suspense and hopeless worry were easier to weather. He sympathized too deeply with the wrangling, frightened, angry, despondent population of the the-

atre to resent the obloquy he had to share with Wallace. These poor actor-folk were out their pay, their priceless time, their strenuous and most exacting labor. He and his play were not to blame, but it was natural that they should be blamed. He was sorry for every one of them, for the harrassed Wallace, for Kraus at once furious and downcast, for the little ballet girl whose mother was sick at the hospital, for the wardrobe woman who was over sixty, but dressed and made up like sixteen in mortal terror of losing her job, for all the rank and file who had been calculating on this engagement at the Greenhouse to tide them over the dull summer season. He would have emptied his lean purse in their behalf, but for the remembrance of Sophy; as it was, he dipped into it a little too freely, he thought afterwards.

Sophy was not hanging over the banisters outside of their door to greet him as usual; she was not even at the door; and the whole little place was silent with a kind of mysterious, secretive and expectant silence as of the enchanted palace in a fairytale, where fearsome powers may be let loose and tremendous events occur upon any chance movement. Cleve cast a glance around, wondering, not without a passing sensation of reprieve. On one hand, the door into the kitchenette was ajar; that opposite of their bedroom opened just as he was moving towards it, opened wide with a dramatic flourish, and Sophy sailed out, sweeping him a prodigious courtesy, with neck arched, eyelids lowered, head turned ever so slightly in a pose both haughty and coquettish. Recovering, she burst into delighted laughter to see his surprise.

“Say how you like it, say how you like it, say how you like it!” She danced around him, revolving on

tiptoe with arms outspread, filling the room with gay clamor, an entrancingly pretty figure in lissome draperies, transparent, cloudy-hued, that somehow contrived to float and cling at once. There was a close under-gown of brocade woven through with metal threads that caught the light; breadths of suave velvet, roseate, dusted with a silvery bloom, darker rose in the hollows of the folds, fell over it. Sophy had sandals of satin with twinkling, beaded straps and buttons; her neck and dimpled back showed ravishingly under the caresses of those supple chiffons; a fantastic fillet of green gauze and the silver stuff was bound around her little fair head among the curls, and fastened with a cabochon and tassel of mock emeralds, pearls, and loops and pendants of beads. Cleve looked at the little radiant, decorated creature with a man's awe, eclipsing admiration; Sophy's hasty adjurations not to touch her were unnecessary; he would no more have touched her than he would have tried to fondle a humming-bird.

"It just came a little while ago. Oh, I was so afraid you'd be home before I could get into it!" she explained breathlessly. "Such a job hooking it up! You can't see where I'm fastened in, you know, it laps over and under all kinds of ways. But I think it's on right. Say how you like it, now, say how you like it!"

"Why, it's beautiful! You hardly look real!" said Cleve honestly; he was thinking that it was strange a style patently designed to provoke the senses should almost repel. It was dazzling but it did not allure; about its spectacular beauty one missed some quality authentic and enduring—or did Sophy's own flower-like presence carry that suggestion? She felt a lack of heartiness in his comment,

and stood still, the animation fading from her face.

"Oh, *don't* you like it, Cleve? I did so want you to like it!"

"Why, of course I do! The only thing is you don't seem like my own little Sophy somehow," said Cleve, exercising a wretched skill he had developed at saying what would infallibly please her. He wanted her to be happy; it silenced his conscience, and the trick came easily to anyone gifted with a quick and enlightened imagination. "You look like a fairy princess—but where's my wife?" he said—and, as a hundred times before, with a kind of shamed pity, saw her brighten on the instant.

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it, I guess I'll have to go and take it off," she said in happy regret. "But oh, Cleve, isn't it the *dandiest*, honest? I think the turban is *darling*. It looks just like Mary Garden. I got a hat, too, but I better save that up to show you after we've had our supper; it's all hand embroidered, something like a hat I saw that Mrs. Gherardi have on one time, only this shape wouldn't become her, I don't believe; she couldn't wear anything real youthful, not like my dress, either. She's too thin, anyway," Sophy announced, surveying her own slim and shapely roundness with pardonable satisfaction. "It's more on Mrs. Cook's style—kind of fancy, you know. My, just think what they must spend! I don't care! They won't either one of 'em have anything niftier than mine, if I do have to wear the same thing every night!"

Cleve heard her in a thunderclap of unwelcome recollection. Under the strain of the last few days he had clean forgotten the invitation—forgotten the Cooks as if they had ceased to exist—forgotten

everything except the accumulating misfortunes of the Greenhouse. And now what was to be done?

"I got a letter from her—Mrs. Cook, I mean—" Sophy went on, carefully removing the green and silver confection from her head; she turned it around, scrutinizing it for possible damage, and disentangled a long, shining hair from amongst the gewgaws with cautious, patient fingers. "Goodness, I'm tired standing up so long, but I can't sit down with this on, not till we get to Cooks' anyhow. I'll *have* to sit in it while we're there, but it'll anyway be fresh the first time they see it. It was a real nice note—only she says we're to come for the 'week-end,' Saturday the twelfth, and the way she talks sounds like she expects us to go home Monday. Kind of funny, telling people right out you don't want 'em to stay any longer than just so long! Well, anyway!" Here Sophy disappeared into the bedroom whence her voice presently took up the theme again, in accents somewhat muffled by processes incidental to the business of taking the dress off over her head, and assuming another. "You ought to go and get your dress suit right off, Cleve, hadn't you better?"

Cleve had had enough time while she chattered to assemble his wits, but they seemed to have scattered like a flock of sheep in a panic. He made another effort. "Well, I don't know, Sophy—maybe we won't go after all—maybe we won't be able to—to get away—"

"Why? Is it the play?"

"Well—yes—there's been a—a change—"

She came to the door, settling her hair which was a little tumbled by the late experiments, and fastening the final hooks. "It does seem as if they never *would*—what's the matter anyhow, Cleve?"

He told her haltingly, minimizing the catastrophe; but, as he had foreseen, Sophy remembered all too well the disastrous campaign of the *Belles, Massillon*, the hospital, the absconding manager. Her blue eyes darkened with fright and despair as the recital proceeded; she cast herself on him wildly. “*Cleve!* Then they won’t—? You won’t—? There won’t be *anything*, after all? You won’t get *anything*? They won’t pay you *anything*?”

“They don’t owe me anything, Sophy dear. They’ve paid me the prize-money, you know. Mr. Wallace and the men that were backing the theatre have lost a great deal of money themselves—”

“Oh, I know! That’s just the way he’d talk!” said Sophy fiercely. “*You* don’t know if it’s so or not. He might just be rolling you along like they all do, for all you can tell. *He* don’t care what becomes of you or anybody in the show. I’ll bet he’s got *his* money all right, all right! *He’s fixed*, you’ll see—”

“Oh, Sophy, don’t say things like that, don’t let yourself think them! Mr. Wallace is as honest as I am, and he’s in worse trouble—”

“But what shall we *do*, Cleve?” Sophy looked all around the room, and broke into terrified sobs. “Oh, Cleve, what shall we *do*? ” The pitiful wail went to Cleve’s heart; a sense of impotence tortured him. He tried to soothe and cheer her with words that sounded false in his own ears. Why should she have any confidence in him? Even her love could not blind her to the fact that he was a stark failure. He had never made a fair living, never even made a poor living by his vaunted talents, and he had tried all these ten years—a conclusive experiment, surely!

“I w-wouldn’t have got that dress—I w-wouldn’t have thought of g-getting it,” said poor Sophy

among her sobs. "B-but you *s-said* I could, Cleve. I thought it was all right!"

"It will be all right—I'll make it all right!" Cleve said—but without conviction, and drearily aware that he could not convince her. His assumption of competence, efficiency, mastery was as feeble a sham as his assumption of cheerfulness, he thought bitterly; but he kept on: "One dress isn't going to break us up. How much did it cost anyhow?"

"T-two hundred and f-forty dollars," Sophy sobbed. "And there's the hat, and some other things. I didn't know, Cleve. You never t-told me nothing, or I wouldn't have done it. And now you ain't got all that money, Cleve, I *know* you ain't! What shall we *do*?"

She was right. Two hundred and forty dollars might as well as have been two hundred and forty thousand! Cleve gave up his puerile attempts, which he knew were in reality as much attempts to bolster up his own spirit as Sophy's. "Won't they take the things back?" he asked miserably.

"No, they had to be ch-changed some, you know, and they won't ever, after they've done the least little changing. What'll we *do* when the bill comes, Cleve? Oh, I wisht I hadn't, but you *s-said* I could—!"

"I know, I know, Sophy! It's all my fault! I—I thought everything was going all right," Cleve said, from the depths of his shattered self-conceit. What *were* they going to do? His hopeless gaze wandered to the table littered with his manuscripts—trash, all trash. To find out what your work is worth, try to sell it! All the opinions of all the critics, all the prize-contest juries and Mr. Cooks in creation went for naught in comparison with that

sovereign test. Then what was his worth? Nothing or next to nothing—until you can pay the milkman with a sonnet!

“We—we might ask George—he’s always got money,” said Sophy. “But I’d—I’d hate to, Cleve. They’re saving up to get married—”

“No, we won’t do *that!*” said Cleve, with savage decision, rebellion flaring within him. Ask George! Faugh, the shabby expedient! Take George’s money honestly earned by hard work that was worth something, to help out a vain, selfish, dreaming fool who thought he could write! “No, we’ll not do *that!*” he repeated, and put Sophy out of his arms, and went over to the table. “Never mind, Sophy, I know somebody I can borrow it of. Not Mr. Cook—I don’t want Mr. Cook to know anything about this,” he commanded her hastily. “He’ll have heard about the Greenhouse, of course, but I don’t want him to know anything about *us*. There’s another man I think will lend it to me. I’ll ask him, anyhow.” It was Levin he had in mind. He spoke to her with sudden firmness. “Don’t worry any more. Just go ahead and get ready to go to the Cooks. I’ve thought of something.”

Sophy watched him turn to the table and reach for the paper, in doubt and hope. “Are you—don’t you believe you better just stop writing, and—and get something to do, Cleve? I mean a regular job of *work?*” she queried timidly. “Is that what you’re thinking about?”

“No, not exactly.”

His harsh laugh startled her; what was there funny about it, all at once? “Well, we got to pay whoever you borrow of, Cleve—we got to pay *some* time—this is just kind of putting it off, you know,” she warned, the unconscious revelation of distrust

stabbing him again to the very quick. Alas, was it not well-founded? "We got to pay first or last."

"We're going to pay," said Cleve. Who would have believed tragedy would come so cheap, he queried inwardly. Two hundred and forty dollars! Not for some black crisis between life and death, not to save them from hospitals and surgical operations, from the disgrace of eviction, from starvation and the morgue; two hundred and forty dollars for a dressmaker's bill! It was a joke fit to rock the seats of heaven with laughter. Very well, let heaven show him another way out! ". . . When I bow down myself . . . the Lord pardon Thy servant in this thing . . ."

He fitted the sheet of paper into the machine and began: "*My dear Mr. Delmar—*"

CHAPTER VII

SOPHY, in the automobile, driving out from the Westhampton station through the pretty Long Island country which was all in gala spring attire with fruit-trees blossoming and fine white roads and great, deliberately picturesque farms, gardens, homesteads on every hand, experienced no sensation of unreality; perhaps she was not imaginative enough to fear it all a lovely dream from which she must presently wake up to the cramped, dingy Harlem flat and the lifeless air, and the ceaseless grind of noise, as many another girl in her place would have feared and fancied. On the contrary there was a solid and satisfying reality to Sophy about every inch, every minute of the journey. Here they were in a car that could not have cost a cent less than seven thousand dollars, according to what she had noticed about the price of cars, with a shoffer on the front seat, and everything stylish and up-to-date, just as she had expected—except that Mr. Cook had not met the train himself. Sophy guessed that he would have, but *Mrs.* put her foot down on it; he was just a plain little man, and didn't give a snap of his finger for style, you could see *that*, but *Mrs.* though she probably meant nice, was just naturally stiffer, and a whole lot more on the society order, you know, and likely had him under her thumb. How'd she expect the shoff would know 'em when they got off? Anyway, he did! He'd ought to get a job in the detectives. Came right up and s'luted

kind of like he'd use to been in the army and says: "Mr. Harrod?" just like that, and took the suit-cases. Spotted them that quick, and in all that push, too! Machines and dogs, and young fellows and girls in the *best* looking sports clothes—Mrs. Gherardi didn't have anything on *them*, the girls, that is; and lots of real old gentlemen and ladies with these golf-outfits; it was about the same kind of crowd you'd see in Hamilton at the swell hotels about the middle of the winter. Well, anyway! Here they were, and my, but it was quiet in the country, wasn't it? They must get deadly lonesome, the houses so far apart and way back so that it looked like they couldn't hardly see the road, and sometimes going along you wouldn't even know there *was* a house anywhere for miles, just big old trees and all kind of dark and creepy underneath 'em. Just think what it must be at night if it was this way at six o'clock in the evening! Sophy would be scared to take a step out of doors. Even if there wasn't any hold-up men—and it would be the grandest place ever to stage a hold-up!—but even if there wasn't any of *them*, there'd be cows. *Brrh!*

The car left the main road, wheeling up a drive between two high stone posts whitewashed so that they gleamed through the gathering dusk in a fashion too reminiscent of Spring Grove Cemetery in the city of her birth to recommend them to Sophy's taste. But on one hand, a little stone house whitewashed too, with a steeply sloping roof of mottled slates, and stout chimneys, one at either gable-end, stood back from the road in a nook of trees; small, black pointed evergreens guarded the doorstep and the bit of lawn in front where children and a dog were playing around a baby-carriage. To the rear one caught a glimpse of a row of white

fence-palings, and a prim gate under a white framework arch where rambler roses climbed.

"Is that the house? Oh, he isn't stopping! Isn't that it?" Sophy appealed to the chauffeur. "Well, who lives there, then?"

"It's the care-taker's cottage, madame."

"It's awfully cute and home-y," said Sophy, rather disappointed. "Still, I might have known it wouldn't be Mrs. Cook's. That baby-carriage—"

The chauffeur suffered a sharp attack of coughing; he clung to his steering-gear, however, and a curve of the road put the caretaker's cottage behind them out of sight. They went on in a deepening quiet; there were some high, open, rolling meadows bounded with stone walls or lines of hedge, their undulations merging in the distance with a twinkling streak that was the sea. More charming white out-buildings were posed in quaint formality around a turf plaza, like a child's toy village; a windmill presided over neat barns; and rounding a final sweep of road, the car came up at last before the portico of the big, plain white house. Within, they had a minute or two of waiting in a spacious silence peopled in the background, as it were, with maids in crisp uniforms; it was almost the same as a stylish hotel, Sophy decided, with lots of people around to wait on you, and that red velvet carpet on the stairs; you missed the noise, that was all. Mrs. Cook came in, and in a second, Mr. Cook too.

The latter Sophy found very friendly and easy, as before; and both he and *Mrs.* explained their non-appearance at the train—that is to say, Sophy took it for an explanation—with reference to other guests already arrived. It seemed that, notwithstanding the dislike for large house-parties attributed to her,

Mrs. Cook had managed to collect a sizeable table-full for her "week-end." "Our joint wisdom suggested another man or two," Cook said, handling his eye-glasses with his habitual little mannerisms. "So we got Dan Levin, and your fellow-sufferer, Waldemar. No Spartan, is he? At any rate, he doesn't believe in keeping silence about his wrongs—anything but! He's perfectly tremendous on the subject of the Greenhouse. Dan drove him down in his car, and reached here claiming to be in a state of collapse after two hours of Waldemar's impassioned rhetoric!"

"Never fear! A word to the wise, you know. I'm not going to open up!" said Cleve, glad to adopt the other's light tone. He was grateful to the little man, appreciating the tact with which Cook had touched on and gone safely by a dangerous topic that yet could not be ignored; and he had to laugh whole-heartedly at the picture of the eminently robust Levin's supposed physical prostration. Cook went on talking amiably; and on her side Mrs. Cook could be overheard accounting for the augmented gathering to Sophy: "Enough for two tables of bridge, in case anyone wants to play. Sunday is always rather slow in the country—"

"I'll say it *is* slow!" Sophy agreed heartily. "Don't you get kind of tired of it, sometimes? I tried it in the country once, and I just couldn't *stand* it—the quiet, you know—I mean to live there right straight ahead, you know," she added in hasty politeness. "Visiting's different, of course."

"Well, we like it. One gets used to it—" And dinner was at eight; if Mrs. Harrod would like to go up now, someone would show them their rooms, etc., etc. They were shown, accordingly.

The host and hostess, retreating to their own

reservation somewhat later, exchanged cryptic words. "Well?" said *Mr.*; and "Well?" ejaculated *Mrs.*

"Having Dan Levin was a happy idea. Counts me one, I should say!"

"Yes, he knows how to talk to everybody, and he doesn't *mind*. It's a gift. But Mr. Waldemar won't mind either, because she's so extraordinarily pretty. And neither of them having a wife, there's *that* difficulty out of the way!" said *Mrs. Marshall* thankfully.

"Mary Rudd, too—"

"Yes, Mary will be nice to her. Mary's a dear."

"Edith—"

"Oh, well! We couldn't very well help having Edith. Anyway, I think that's all over now."

The fact was this momentous "week-end" had been the occasion of more thought and argument to the pair of Cooks than any score of week-ends in their married career hitherto. "We didn't have half so much trouble deciding what people to invite the time we entertained General Joffre," *Bessie* said afterwards with a sigh of wonder. At first she had been for making it very intimate—"just ourselves." But "just ourselves" appearing to both of them upon mature consideration a little "strenuous" and also a little "obvious"—*Bessie's* phrases—they resolved on *Messrs. Levin* and *Waldemar*. Then arose a new moot point, *Cook* contending that more men meant more women.

"Come now, *Bessie*, a party of all men—? You talk about being 'obvious.' Won't that look—?" Their eyes met.

"Why, *she* won't know!" said the lady, in airy and not unamiable contempt.

"No, but he *will!*" Again they looked at each other, and *Mrs. Cook* surrendered, shrugging.

"I suppose you are right, but it will be next to impossible to get the right women. Women are so—— *However*——!" She shrugged again.

All this, by the mercy of Heaven, would have been quite incomprehensible to little Mrs. Cleveland Harrod, had she overheard it, even had she been miraculously enabled to penetrate their thought; whatever her husband perceived or suspected, he shut his eyes to it, aware of an essential humanity in the Cooks' code. For that matter, upon any question of conduct that should have come up these days, Cleve would have suspended judgment; his own private and particular glass mansion was too breakable to permit of his throwing stones. At the moment, if not happy, he was excited and reckless enough to pass for happy; Sophy had never seen him in better spirits; it was she who was the serious one, in odd contrast to their everyday moods. She was too concerned over the possible state of the new dress and especially the turban after this suit-case trip, and too anxious to get them out, shake them out, put them on again and see how they looked, to pay much attention to surroundings which if novel were not at all interesting, upon a casual inspection. To be sure the bedrooms and bath in the wing to which the maid escorted them were two or three times the size of the entire Harrod apartment, but they seemed to Sophy bare in the extreme, like all the rest of the house which she mentally pronounced the barest place she ever saw, nothing the least bit *cozy* about it! Indeed, a classic austerity becoming to the frugal and laborious character of life in the country prevailed throughout the interior of Eversofar; there were plain walls, virtuous white muslin curtains, mahogany four-post beds and highboys of New England derivation; only once in a while the

scheme allowed an outburst of delightful gaudiness in glazed chintzes and calicoes copied from those with which our ancestors similarly relieved their feelings. In Sophy's room the hangings displayed bunches of flowers in a wild assemblage of crimson, orange, cream and wine-y tints tied with vivid green ribbon on a black ground. In Cleve's they were of silk in clear red and white stripes for all the world like peppermint candy, and the big easy-chair by his fireplace was covered with it, too! "Did you *ever*?" was Sophy's not too enthusiastic comment. And what did they give her and Cleve two separate rooms for, anyhow? Cleve came in as she was putting on the gauze headgear, sitting down at the little, low, old-time dressing-stand, where a bowl of bright tulips complimented the guest—and cluttered up the table-top so that there was no room for anything, Sophy thought, shoving them to one side.

"All ready?"

She abandoned even her pleasantly engrossing task to survey him rapturously. "Cleve, you do look the swellest! Well, I'm going to have the handsomest fellow in the room, that's all! I'm so glad you aren't *little*, like Mr. Cook. I do love a man to be *big*!"

"Well, you'll presently see somebody bigger—Mr. Levin. And I hope he'll admire his purchase," said Cleve, looking down over himself with the odd, grating note in his laughter which Sophy sometimes caught of late. She looked at him, echoing his words, puzzled.

"Purchase'? What you mean, *purchase*?"

"It was bought with his money, wasn't it? If that isn't his purchase, what is?"

"Why, you aren't going to say anything to him

about it—or *he* won't, will *he*?" said Sophy, uneasily. His laugh, hard as it was, reassured her. "Well, I didn't know!" she said, pouting. "You hadn't ought to tease me that way—and anyhow, you do say the funniest things sometimes; I can't ever get used to 'em."

They went downstairs and found their way to an extensive drawing-room, as meagrely supplied as all the other rooms she had seen, which led Sophy to the shrewd conjecture that the Cooks had over-reached building this whale of a house so that when they got through they found themselves too short of money to furnish it properly! Look at this room, for instance, without a single picture or "ornament"! There were, however, two obese sofas drawn up to face each other across the hearth, with tall lamps placed conveniently; and the occupant of one of them bounced down and circled around Cleve with waggings of his whole body and sniffs and caracoles and exuberant doggish sounds of welcome. It was Poilu—*avertite omen!* Sophy recognized him with a sudden sinking of the heart. A pair of glass doors at the end of the room stood open into a glass enclosure of plants and vines; and Mrs. Gherardi appeared between them, long, tall, elegantly lanky, costumed as always in her exasperatingly defeating style. She recalled Poilu, chiding him, and came up and held out her hand, uttering civilities in that agreeable voice. Sophy hated her.

Cleve managed *his* civilities well enough; he could not manage his all too ready changes of color, feeling himself with an inward imprecation turn hot and cold, and trusting that it did not show. Perhaps it did not, even to Sophy, for now Mr. Cook was presenting Mr. Levin who, sure enough, was taller and wider and much heavier than Cleve, and who

looked down at her with a very kind interest and made some joke about her feeling as if she had to shout up an elevator-shaft to reach him; and then there was the shorter and stouter Mr. Waldemar with his eye-glasses on a black ribbon like Mr. Cook's, and *he* looked at her in a way not wholly unfamiliar to an ex-chorus-girl, which caused Sophy to bridle a little. The only other lady was Mrs. Steven Rudd, who turned out to be a sister-in-law of that Mrs. Gherardi whom she was visiting, it appeared. Sophy was ready to dislike her vehemently though she was very pretty and simply dressed and had a plain, direct, and wholesome and attractive way. Poilu made such a noise barking and jumping up on Cleve that they all had to raise their voices.

"Why, that dog acts as if he knew you, Harrod!" Mr. Levin said. Mrs. Cook launched briskly—in fact, volubly!—into talk about Bermuda, the glass-bottomed boats, the Devil's Hole and so on; and Mrs. Gherardi finally silenced the dog. Another gentleman in a dress-suit came into the room, but nobody introduced him to Sophy, though he presently came up and offered her a doll's portion of lemonade in a tiny glass on a tray, just as if he were one of the family doing it for a joke. She was about to take it when quick as a flash—just like *that!*—she recognized it for one of those things they called cocktails. She had seen Cleve himself mixing them—with *liquor!*

"No, I thank you, I wouldn't wish any, if you don't mind," she said to the gentleman politely. "I'm temperance. Only, of course, it's all right for anybody else." He did not answer a word, but went along with the tray and glass as glum as *glum*; but all the rest of them suddenly seemed to be talking

at once. Sophy privately opined that the nefarious mixture had gotten to their heads already.

They went in to dinner in couples, strolling along in a free and easy manner, taking their time as if it made no difference to Mrs. Cook whether everything got cold and dried up or not; and instead of the husbands and wives being paired together as Sophy would have expected, here she was with Mr. Levin, and Cleve was behind somewhere with that Mrs. Gherardi. Sophy neither knew nor cared how the others had adjusted themselves; it demanded all her pride to keep from turning around, to satisfy or torment herself, she did not know which. The size of the dining-room and the number of waitresses reminded her afresh of a swell hotel; but there were no small tables, only a single very large circular one with silver candlesticks and a mound of flowers. The light was rather dim. Mrs. Cook was heard to announce that she had made an epoch-making discovery which—she said—would do away forever with the problem of seating people and so revolutionize the art of dinner-giving! “It’s as simple as the fourth dimension. Make all the bachelors—girls and men—sit down side by side. Then make every wife sit opposite her husband——”

“So she can watch him?” Mr. Waldemar inquired in an innocent way. Sophy wondered how they could laugh at a thing like that. That Mr. Waldemar wasn’t any too good anyway, if *she* knew anything about it! Nevertheless, she was not sorry to find herself squarely across the table from Cleve and that woman. Mr. Levin was still next to her on one side, on the other Mr. Cook himself, a pleasant neighborhood as presently developed, for both of them seemed to Sophy increasingly likable. They were such perfect gentlemen and talked so nice, not

a bit *fresh* like that man Waldemar was inclined to be. Anyhow she *knew* Mr. Cook, knew him much better than she did Mrs. Cook somehow; and he was real friendly and interested, not just *putting on* when she told him about George and Miriam and the apartment and how she managed the housework with Cleve around writing and all little things like that. She didn't say a word about that Greenhouse Theatre or Cleve's plays, of course; she wouldn't gab around about her husband's business the way some women did; and therefore, in a pause, she was doubly surprised to hear Mr. Waldemar say to Cleve: "Here you're working with Delmar now?" And Cleve smiled just as *easy*, and said yes, they began this week.

Well then, didn't Mr. Waldemar pitch in and simply give the Greenhouse Theatre *fits*, and that Mr. Wallace too, and a whole bunch of other people! He kept dragging Cleve into it, saying things like: "Isn't that so, Harrod?" and "Didn't they tell you that, too?" And most astounding of all, he came right out and said Cleve was in luck to have a job; that *he* hadn't any, and he was stony broke, and didn't know what he'd do if it weren't for the Cooks and other kind friends giving him a hand-out like this, once in a while. As it was, he would have to touch Daniel for five hundred; Daniel had wads of the stuff. Dear old Danny, his friends loved him for himself alone! And while Sophy sat dumb before these indecent revelations, the whole table laughed; they actually laughed, Cleve as heartily as any of them—and five hundred happened to be exactly the sum he had borrowed of Mr. Levin! The big man himself laughed; and then, noticing her sober and wondering eyes, adjured her genially not to pay any attention to the fellow! He indicated

Waldemar, who all along had seemed to be in earnest, and now sat with the only grave face at the table besides Sophy's, sipping his champagne—of which he must have had entirely too much already, in her opinion. They all had, she thought nervously.

"I say, don't listen to him, Mrs. Harrod. Wally talks that way because he thinks it sounds like Whistler, Oscar Wilde—all that sort of thing—cynical and brilliant, you know."

Sophy, wondering who or what Whistler and Oscar Wilde were, followed his lead, trying to laugh, and Cook, flinging himself into the breach—as he described it afterwards—talked, talked, talked. "It was strenuous!" he told Bessie. "She had her eye on Harrod and Edith all the time."

At last the dinner was over; Mrs. Cook stood up, everybody stood up, with a shuffling of chairs, and the men stepping out of the way of the trained dresses, and picking up fans. The ladies went back into the drawing-room, and Mrs. Rudd came and sat down by Sophy and talked about Mr. Harrod's work, and a little about her own husband, who it seemed was a writer too, like Cleve, only he wrote mostly articles for the magazines; they had both been in France through the War, and had lived here and there all over the world since; just now he was in Milan, in Italy, making some study of the labor troubles, Mrs. Rudd said, so she was staying at home on this side with her mother. In spite of herself, Sophy began to like her; she was the very opposite of that Mrs. Gherardi, who made a show of being nice too (*cat!*), but not eliciting much response, drifted off into the glassed room by herself. After a while the men came in—and Sophy presently missed Cleve.

It ought to be put to her credit that she did not

follow him into that accursed sun-room. Nobody made a move towards it except Mr. Waldemar, who lounged to the doors, glanced in, and lounged away again, making a remark to Mr. Levin in an undertone which Sophy, sitting tense and unheeding while Cook did his best to divert her, strained her ears to catch, with unhappy success. "Two's company, three's none!" said Waldemar with an unpleasant grin; and he forthwith went and sat down by Sophy, not improbably judging the moment propitious.

In truth, almost any other woman in her place would have taken to reprisals, especially as here was the by no means unwilling Waldemar with his significant eyes. But Sophy had no such impulse; she was too wretched here in this great handsome house amongst these people whom she did not know, whose talk she could not understand, whose facile laughter bewildered her. She longed with her whole soul to be back in the Hundred-and-Thirty-Eighth Street rooms, washing up the supper dishes with Cleve smoking his pipe, instead of sitting here all dressed out in cloth-of-silver and rose velvet (along-side the very man they owed for every stitch of it!) while Cleve laughed and murmured with another woman yonder in the palm-room, or whatever they called it. They had different words from hers, different thoughts in their heads, different ways, different everything—and in their company Cleve was different too, she thought in misery. He was like the others, but she could never be like them! Waldemar was speaking, and she forced herself to attend to him.

"Are you in the east wing, Mrs. Harrod? What do you think of those rooms? I rather fancied myself in those decorations. Eh? Oh, you didn't know I made the designs for the entire house. The chintz

was copied from a piece I found in an old Connecticut attic."

Sophy saw that something complimentary was expected of her. "It's awfully cute," she said vaguely.

"Feminine enough, do you think?"

"I—I guess so."

"I'd like to do *you* a *boudoir*," said Waldemar, cocking his head to one side, and eyeing her appraisingly. "Where do you live?"

Sophy told him, the locality she named not arousing the least surprise in Mr. Waldemar; as he himself would have said, he was not born yesterday. "Oh, I must make a note of the address. If I should drop in some afternoon, you would give me a cup of tea, wouldn't you?"

"Tea?" said Sophy, astounded. "Do you have headaches? Why, I could make some for you, of course. I have it for Cleve sometimes when he isn't feeling just right—a cold or something. We don't drink it other times." Whereat Mr. Waldemar looked oddly discomfited, and Levin on the other side of her, observing the artist's countenance, burst into a resounding laugh. And then Daniel Levin, whose money that he loaned so readily was amassed by the manufacture of beverages Sophy deemed iniquitous, who if an upright and forcible man, was still a man about town, more or less of a worldling, not too soft-hearted or self-sacrificing, Daniel Levin rose up and performed an act of discerning kindness, worthy of a gentleman.

"Do let me show you the sun-room," he said. "It's the only place Waldemar didn't have anything to do with. Elsewhere the trail of the decorator is over it all. Cook, I want to show Mrs. Harrod the sun-room."

So into the sun-room they went, in the easiest,

most natural manner imaginable; and there were Cleve and Mrs. Gherardi prosaically smoking cigarettes like two men; jealousy became absurd at the mere view. They must have been smoking all evening, the air was so heavy with the tobacco, it made Sophy cough.

CHAPTER VIII

TOWARDS the end of the summer, the Molière was advertised to open October first with a new play, *The Frame-Up*, "by Adrian Delmar and Cleveland Harrod, starring Harold Langdon." The two authors had labored writing, re-writing and rehearsing all season, careless of hot waves and holiday recreations. "But audiences know nothing of the months and months of hard work that must be done before the curtain goes up to give them two hours' entertainment. And why should they?" Delmar said leniently. "After all, they pay us and they have a right to demand the best." It was not to be questioned that he gave them the best of acting, of scenery, of equipment, of his own inventive and creative effort. He was at his theatre early and late, directing, experimenting, re-trying, allowing nobody any rest. He drove Langdon, he drove the young leading woman, Mabel Dare, he drove the stage-hands, he drove his associate playwright, he drove everybody, but no harder than he drove himself. No detail was too small for him, no difficulty withstood his perseverance; and on the side of experience and technical knowledge, his bitterest rival must have yielded him the final word. It was genius; and how genius could exist and function in company with ideals intrinsically so cheap was the marvel, Cleve used to think, looking on, rebellious, yet forcing himself to a sardonic resignation. He had to admit that the results justified Delmar on the surface at least; and Delmar's art, his study, his

philosophy never went below the surface. The play that emerged from this tireless and admirable effort was not Cleve's play, but it was a play; it was set in irreproachable taste, acted superlatively well, and for aught Cleve could prove, better constructed, answering stage requirements better and vastly more certain of success than its original. In fine, it was what the public wanted, according to Delmar; and can any aim be higher than to give the public what it wants?

Cleve's own part had been done with thoroughness; might as well be hanged for a sheep as a lamb, he thought savagely, debasing his skill to the task. Having imparted the Boccaccian flavor, he supposed his labors at an end; but lo, on taking the manuscript to Delmar, the great man, while congratulating him warmly on those passages where Cleve had supplied the desired "thrill" in full measure, now shook his head over others in which, it would seem no "thrill" was possible! Throughout he treated Cleve with the handsomest consideration, never alluding to their first disagreement and Cleve's hot words, and avoiding the slightest reflection on his subsequent right-about face; and he now explained with his customary apologies that upon a re-reading, certain scenes wherein "passion" cut no figure, must yet be altered to meet another requirement of the public. "Here, where the girl leaves her mother, there ought to be more of the *human* feeling, Mr. Harrod, more emotion. 'One touch of nature makes the whole world kin,' as the great poet says. The audience should feel the pull at its heart-strings; it invariably responds——"

Cleve eyed him meditatively. "I see," he said after a short interval. In fact, by this time he had arrived at a much quicker and keener perception of

Mr. Delmar's artistic aims than was possible at the outset of their acquaintance. Human feeling, eh? Emotion? Exactly as Delmar's "thrills" and "passion" and all the rest of it, translated into plain English, meant lewd suggestiveness, so his "human feeling" must be translated into maudlin sentimental slip-slop by which the soft-hearted—not to say the soft-headed—in the audience would be moved to tears. The business offered no difficulties—on the contrary! Cleve knew that no trick could be easier than that of affecting people with sham pathos; he sat down to it; and when by these successive efforts he had removed—as it seemed to him—every vestige of humor and manliness from his unfortunate play, Delmar applauded the results! "Of course the fate of a play, even of a play so strong as this, is always on the lap of the gods," he said, in kindly warning. "Nevertheless, Mr. Harrod, I would almost be willing to guarantee its success. With that superb artist Langdon playing the hero and Mabel Dare opposite him—a most delicate and charming comedienne—!" Any actor who appeared in a play of Mr. Delmar's was, for the duration of that engagement, an "artist" and a "finished" or "admirable" or "delicate and charming" one at that; thus he referred to them in every published utterance, the adjectives varying in strength in exact proportion to the length of the play's run, and the size of the crowds it attracted; and by and large, Mr. Delmar published a good many utterances, which of course were not puffing advertisements but disinterested expressions of opinion.

Cleve assented; he assented to everything these days; he saw his hero made over into a showy black-

guard, his fashionable women into extraordinary simpering viragos, without a word of protest. He saw his agreeable witty old gentleman become a lecherous Silenus, hiccoughing smut with a leer; he saw the very butler, a quiet, self-respecting servant in the original piece, constrained to behave with an ostentatious cringing obsequiousness that would have revolted Delmar himself, had he met with it off the stage. He saw—but to catalogue all the distortions, all the falsities, all the monstrous misinterpretations Cleve saw would be a woeful business. He saw, amongst other things, his own name spread at large upon the bill-boards, and that ought to suffice him, he told himself in bitterness.

During the torrid weather, he borrowed again (of Delmar this time!) and sent Sophy up to the Adirondacks to Roscoe Lake where the Beales were once more established. She rebelled at going, crying and clinging to him and beseeching him to find a place nearer home; and Cleve now discovered with surprise and real remorse that their cramped quarters in the stifling hot, unkempt flat-building which he himself never spoke of except to express the impatient hope that they would not have to endure them forever—this place of his contempt was to Sophy an abode of dear delights!

“I think we have just a sweet little home,” she quavered. “I wouldn’t ever want to go away from here, not even if we got so we could afford it. And you like it, too, Cleve, you know you do, for all you keep running it down and talking about what we’ll have some day. You just talk like that because you think I ain’t satisfied since we been to Cooks’ and seen how they live,” said Sophy acutely. “Why, Cleve, I wouldn’t change with ‘em for anything on

this earth. That great big barn! It just made me tired to think what a job it must be to run and keep clean and everything. No, *sir!* I wouldn't live *there!* I want to stay right here. I don't know what *makes* you so set on me going up to Beales'. Even with him making us a rate, it'll cost an awful lot. I'd rather take the money, and fix up the flat; I could fix it up to be real cute. I like it best of any place I've ever lived—maybe because it's my own, I wouldn't wonder." She looked about her with all the pride of possession; and Cleve, visioning with a pang the environment wherein she had been born and had lived most of her short life, realized that their cheap apartment building, only one degree removed from a tenement house, came up to Sophy's utmost standards. Crowding and noise, a hideous lack of privacy, ugliness that had not even the virtue of usefulness or necessity, meant nothing to her; she had never known anything else.

"It's too hot for you here. That's the reason I want you to get out of it," he said. "The air feels dead. I'm afraid it will start you coughing again. You can't stand it for the whole summer."

"Oh, shoo! I always feel fine summers. It's the cold weather that gets me—or it used to get me before I got cured. I ain't coughed hardly at all since that one spell this spring," Sophy declared. "I don't *want* to go way off without you, Cleve——"

"But you'll be with George and Miriam. Won't that be all right?"

"Yes, George and Mirry are just crazy to have me sticking round every minute, aren't they?" said Sophy drily. "Just seeing 'em would make me lonesomer for you than ever. Why can't you find some place around here instead of that old Roscoe Lake? Then you could come out Sundays."

"It wouldn't be enough of a change for you——"

"Yes, it *would!* I don't *want* a change anyhow," Sophy said with trembling lips. "Oh, Cleve, *please!*!" All at once she burst into sobs so hysterical they alarmed him; he put his arms around her with the soothing words and endearments he had hitherto found an infallible remedy and means of persuasion; but now she kept on crying, though with less violence. "I don't *want* to go, Cleve, I d-don't w-want to——"

Cleve had an illumination—or thought he had one. "Is it clothes? Haven't you got enough dresses and things?" he asked, the while he made a rapid mental calculation of assets and liabilities. "I don't believe you need so much for Roscoe Lake. You don't see many people up there——"

To his astonishment, she made a movement of impatience as if to back away, then relented, cuddling to his breast. "I don't care anything about the tiresome old people. I don't want to see them or *anybody*. And I don't want any clothes either. Clothes! I'd have to be fussing with them all the time and then I wouldn't look like anything! I don't see why you won't let me stay with you—I don't see w-why you w-won't——"

In the end, however, he prevailed upon her, or rather she gave in unexpectedly, as if the quarrel, so to call it, had exhausted all her forces, and she had very little in reserve, Cleve knew; her frailness justified him, even while he felt himself a brute. He eagerly promised anything and everything she asked; yes, he would write every day; yes, he would come up in two weeks; yes, he would take his meals at one of the Childs' places, he wouldn't try to cook for himself; no, he wouldn't work too hard; and so on until every act of his daily life, almost every breath

he drew, had been assigned a place and date. It seemed to him that Sophy must spend her entire time devising new regulations, sanitary and recreational, for the spending of his, yet was still uneasy, still apprehensive. He amused himself picturing her probable anxieties; she was afraid—for example—that he would be struck by lighting; that a mad dog would bite him; that he would be suffocated to death in the upper berth of a sleeping car; that he would contract bubonic plague, appendicitis or infantile paralysis from the neighbors' children; Heaven alone knew what fantastic terrors beset that devoted little heart.

He was mistaken; an anxiety much more cruel because more reasonable was harrying her. Cleve had no guess at it until the night she left, as she was whispering goodbyes to him with furtive caresses while they stood in the aisle between the seats which the porter was beginning to slam and shove and drape and otherwise convert into beds. "If—if Mr. Cook, if Mrs. Cook—if they invite you out there to the country again, you going, Cleve?"

"Why, I don't know, I might—" Cleve said; and then, seeing her desolated face, he amended quickly, "that is, for an afternoon, or just over night, if there isn't time enough for me to get up to the Lake."

"I—I wish you wouldn't go out there, Cleve," Sophy faltered wretchedly.

"Why, why not? Why shouldn't I go—?" Cleve was beginning to say when with a strange mixture of shame, of unjust resentment against Sophy, of anger with himself, he understood. The hesitation was only for a second and he finished smoothly enough: "Do you think we're too much indebted to

them already? Well, maybe you're right—maybe I'd better not go after all!"

Sophy brightened for the moment; but who knows how much she believed, or how many nights she had cried herself to sleep while Cleve dreamed peacefully?

As a matter of fact he saw little of Edith Gherardi during this time; she was away a good deal at Bar Harbor, at Newport, at some White Mountains or Cape Cod or Long Island country house, and Cleve's own days were anything but idle. He wrote her rather long letters which, however, were eminently suitable for publication; they may yet see the light with sundry names of places and people deleted in the approved fashion. Of course, there was occasionally some rocket-flight of sanguine, perhaps a little boastful, hopes and plans, but in the main, Cleve's correspondence was only a good-humored and talkative chronicle of the events of his working-day at the *Molière* and elsewhere in the theatrical zone. "Met my amiable acquaintance, Mr. Morris Flexner, today in an interval between two rehearsals as I was going around the corner to refresh the inner Harrod with one of the ham sandwiches you get at Mike's place," he wrote. "You used to get something else there, but now it's buttermilk or iced tea. Morris, upon hearing my errand, invited me with a princely generosity to 'eat on him' at the *Waldorf*. His heart was touched by the spectacle of the needy man of letters, and he ordered a terrifically abundant dish—some sort of *goulash*—and adjured me to go to it! 'S on me, y'know,' says he affluently. 'Here, you George, gimme that lunch-check. Don't you let this guy have it. He's my guest!' It was a noble speech, and made everybody in our neighborhood look around at him in admiration. They were

mostly members of Mr. Flexner's own church—I put this with elegant delicacy—and when we got through he introduced me to several of them, Mr. Nathan, Mr. Sigmund Mack and others. 'Moe, I want you should meet my friend Mr. Harrod,' was his form of presentation: 'Cleve (oh, yes, it's *Cleve!*) shake hands with Moe Vigransky.' Hereupon Moe and I shake hands, and he inquires if I am not Delmar's new arthur? Before I can answer, Flexner intervenes with an arm embracing my back (he can't reach my shoulders): 'Arthur is right! And I'll say he's a comer!' They all look at me with such veneration that I am horribly humiliated, and meanwhile Flexner goes ahead, laying it on with a trowel! It seems a work of supererogation even for a press-agent; enough is too much already, as Morris himself would say. But the strange thing is that all these Nathans and Vigranskys who are in the cloak and suit trade, or are here from Dubuque buying for the Gents' Nobbywear establishment, as one of them told me, or conduct a ladies' outfitting as another said, giving me his business-card,—I say the strange thing is that they are all sincerely and strongly interested in things supposed to be 'artistic' and 'intellectual'; they have boys 'studying violin' at the local conservatory, and girls attending the university courses in literature. Two or three of them knew about me! Research could scarcely go further—and I suppose find less! . . . Flexner, by the way, asked me what had become of *Three Rousing Cheers*, his facetious rendering of the ill-starred *Three Woodland Scenes*, alias *In Arcady*. I have it still, of course, and as there wasn't any contract with Wallace or the defunct Greenhouse, it is probably still all mine. Later Waldemar divulged that he was in the throes of a deal with Dél-

mar to take over the designs for the *Arcady* settings. There may be some connection. But, ingrate that I am, I am firmly resolved not to go into another play with Delmar—*knee* Hirschberg. As he himself hasn't said a word about it, and as this present play may turn out a melancholy fizzle—a flare-up instead of frame-up!—I am very likely troubling my head unnecessarily, and either boring you to death or affording you considerable amusement. Forgive me, and let me keep on boring or amusing or both. It means so much to me . . . ”

And so on. The excerpt is a fair sample, taken at random; could any fault be found with it on the score of propriety? Certainly Cleve did not write to his wife at such length or in such a strain; he never told Sophy the correspondence “meant so much to him”; but, on the other hand, Sophy would not have cared for all that trivial and jeering gossip about people she did not know or in whom she was not interested. Whether it amused and bored Mrs. Gherardi or not, Mrs. Cleve Harrod would have been most grievously disappointed by it. She wanted letters beginning “Sweetheart,” wherein phrases about how lonely he was, and how every little thing around the flat made him think of her, and how September seemed a year off, alternated with inquiries as to how his dearest little girl was getting along, and didn't his precious wife feel some better? Cleve faithfully wrote them; it did not take much time or a severe mental exertion.

He got up to the Lake twice, on each occasion unexpectedly finding himself to his combined amusement and annoyance classed with the celebrities of whom the Beales sometimes made mention—by way of local attraction—in Bermuda. “Oh yes, he's *the* Harrod, the writer, you know,” he overheard Lester

N. confidentially informing a guest; "Oh yes, very well-known man! He's got a play coming out this fall, I understand. Eh? Oh yes, indeed, I've known him for years; he comes up here every summer." The porch rockers would cease swinging, the fancy-work hang idle as he passed with Sophy on his arm, and an earnest murmur followed them. There were requests for autographs; and on his second visit a lady member of the Culture Club screwed up courage to approach him about a lecture in the hotel ballroom—"On any literary subject, Mr. Harrod. That is, I suppose you would prefer to talk on a literary subject, but *anything* would be interesting—" Cleve had to decline, pleading lack of preparation, honestly enough—though the lecture on "*anything*" could not have taxed him much and might have been something of an advertisement, he thought, sneering at himself. A year ago, such an argument would not have occurred to him. "I'm getting quite Delmarien," he thought.

But to one person, at least, he was unchanged. Playwright or plumber, known or unknown, success or failure, it was all one to George Tarvey; and with the instinctive good taste which, when all's said, is only applied common sense, he never asked Cleve any questions, never offered any comment, never brought up the topic at all. "Why, you—derned—old—skunk!" was his greeting, punctuated with thumps and punches on whatever portion of Cleve's anatomy he could get at while the other dodged and ducked and laughed. "You're looking fine, Cleve, fine as silk. What's the good word, hey? Sittin' on the world, hey? Same here! Naw, I can't stop to smoke now—business hours, y'know. I got to go right back in the kitchen and see 't my pot-wranglers don't soldier on the job. I'll come around this

evening soon's I've heard their prayers and tucked 'em all up in bed. Hey? Sure, yes, I'm a chef now —Oscar ain't got anything on *me!* Only I don't do any cheffing myself any more, I just supervise. Say, I got to go—tell you all about it after a while. Ask Soph, *she knows!*" He darted away to his myrmidons. Sophy told Cleve that the wedding and advancement to an interest in the hotel were imminent. Pa Beales would, of course, retire some day and he was training George to succeed him. "It's an awfully kinda *solid* business to be in, and George knows it right from the bottom up," she sighed a little wistfully. "He began in a bakery when he was only fourteen. There's not much about it George don't know. You got a feeling he's always right *there*, anyhow." A sequence of ideas which Cleve followed with ironic clarity led her to ask: "How about *this* play, Cleve? I mean when is it to be?"

"Why, you've seen the advertisement. First of the month."

"Yes, but—you—you don't think anything will happen *this time!* They'll sure give it?"

"Oh yes. Delmar's like George. You can rely on him!" said Cleve grimly. But it was the truth. Mr. Delmar was emphatically the captain of the ship; he had built up a splendidly efficient organization of which he was everywhere and always the sole head. No squabbles among underlings, no hasty-tempered renunciations of roles, no unseemly clashing of orders, no sedition, conspiracy and rebellion disturbed the Molière as erstwhile the Greenhouse. Cleve's bitter fancy likened it to a smoothly-running machine; actors, mechanics, carpenters, scene-shifters, wardrobe women, utility people, everybody, including himself, they were all no more than so many cogs, gears, wheels timed and adjusted to give cer-

tain effects about which individually they knew nothing or had no choice. Amongst them all, Delmar would allow only a single soul, a single brain, his own! "Oh yes, the play's going to be given, Sophy. Of course even Mr. Delmar can't tell whether it will be a hit or not. But *I* haven't anything to do with it!" he said with the hard indifference he had cultivated. Fail or succeed, he would still be convicted of writing revolting rubbish; but there were moments when he could have prayed for its success. Let the thing pay only enough to satisfy his debts and keep Sophy and himself for a year, a few months, a few weeks; let it pay only enough to free him from care so he might go back to his clean and happy work, his work that he loved! A man's reputation is not damned eternally for one piece of shoddy—but it is endangered; give him but the chance to live down, write down *The Frame-Up*, and he would *show* them still!

CHAPTER IX

THE night of the first of October Mrs. Marshall Cook very considerately sent her big limousine up to 138th Street to take Mrs. Harrod to the theatre—an errand and neighborhood at which the chauffeur turned up his nose. He had to wait an unconscionable while in this distinctly common quarter, assailed by the investigating curiosity of innumerable residents, with children screeching and running and scrambling about underfoot, his spick-and-span uniform and the plate-glass and immaculate finish of the automobile in momentary danger from flying missiles—mud amongst them. Cleve, rushing home at the last minute, worn out with the turmoil of the final days—and nights too, for he had not got to bed before dawn this whole week—found Sophy struggling with her dress, nervous, her hair out of order, ready to cry.

“I can’t go, that’s all! I’ll just have to stay here! I *can’t* get it hooked somehow. Oh, don’t *you* try! You’ll get it wrong, and snag the lace or something—*there* now, see what I’ve done!” There was a sound of ripping, and she stamped her foot in a rage, plucking at the unlucky garment; it was that same velvet and brocade which had already figured disastrously among the Harrod experiences. Cleve looked in wonder at the hot, dishevelled little figure; he had never seen Sophy so out of temper and for once was at fault, uncertain how to deal with this mood; manifestly caresses would not serve.

“I’ll get Mrs. What’s-her-name across the hall,

she won't mind," he said, starting for the door against Sophy's hysterical protests.

"No, no, don't! I don't want that old thing coming in here, she's always rubbering around anyhow. *Don't, Cleve! I'll get it fixed—*" But Cleve was already on the way; and Mrs. Lampson obligingly signified an entire willingness to come over and help his wife get her dress on, assisted by Mrs. Schmidt, a lady caller from the floor below. Together they got Sophy hooked up, chatting amiably and not too inquisitively meanwhile, and withdrew, profusely thanked.

"I don't know what came over me—seemed like I couldn't do anything right—I just was nervous, I guess," Sophy explained eagerly and repeatedly. "A person does get that way, sometimes—as if you were going to fly to pieces the next minute, you know—?"

Mrs. Lampson and Mrs. Schmidt agreed in chorus; they knew! And more than likely they did know, for returning across the hall and behind the closing door of the other flat, they exchanged significant smiles.

Cleve hurried through his own toilette. They went down to the *Molière* where people were already going in under the arch of electric lights proclaiming *The Frame-Up* with the star's name underneath. "That's a happy sight for Langdon!" Cleve said with a laugh. In the lobby a pair of easels held photographs of the players and scene at the most dramatic moments, but they did not seem to be attracting much notice. He took Sophy to the box set apart for them in the lower tier and closest to the stage. Mr. and Mrs. Cook would be in the next, he told her; they were coming with—with some friends; he would have to leave her, he must go around "be-

hind," but she wouldn't have a chance to feel lonesome with the crowd everywhere, and the Cooks coming in any minute; he hurried off.

The seats were filling up rapidly; and sure enough little Mr. and Mrs. Cook came directly—and with them what baleful figure in close black draperies, cut to show her square, white shoulders, with a diamond crescent and diamonded spurt of black osprey in her red hair? It was straight hair, not very thick, the color of carrots, Sophy thought violently; why did it look so maddeningly stylish. Mrs. Gherardi had a great, enfolding cape of rich fur with a huge collar softly setting off her head and narrow, high-featured, colorless face; she smiled and nodded to Sophy who had to smile and nod back, all the while teased by a desire to cry and, truth to tell, a desire to scratch! Mrs. Cook, daintily elaborate in ashes-of-roses with a rope of pearls, fluttered in alongside her friend; two men strayed in the rear; and little Mr. Cook came into Sophy's box and drew a chair beside her and talked in his nice way until the lights winked and all the audience suddenly hushed, and the curtain began to move.

"Act I. Morning-room of the Seymour country house at Bournemouth-by-the-Sea." This was a fine example of Delmar's unimpeachable taste in settings, and brought forth a round of applause all by itself, before a single character appeared. The morning-room was delightfully furnished in wicker and chintz; casement windows afforded glimpses of the sea with a wonderful effect of distance and atmosphere; and for a while it stood empty with the curtains blowing gently in that realistic style for which Mr. Delmar was deservedly famous. "Behind" Cleve, keeping out of the way of stage-hands, traps, iron stairways, and suspended platforms

where the electricians would presently be manipulating the small spotlights—for the midnight scene of which Delmar expected great things—worked around to where the great man himself was standing, the white oblong of his evening-shirt announcing him from afar. As Cleve reached him, there arose a light hum of admiring recognition around the “front”; Miss Marion Ritchie had just gone on. She played, or rather posed, the part of the heroine’s older sister, and being one of the most beautiful women on the New York stage, was sure to satisfy.

The act continued. Langdon got a perfect salvo of applause; the scene between him and the ingénue “went over fine,” somebody whispered in Cleve’s ear. “I can always sort of feel it. They all think Dare’s about the cutest little trick ever!” Turning, Cleve discovered that this expert was Flexner. The curtain went down amidst sufficient enthusiasm according to another expert opinion from the same source. “Y’ don’t want ‘em to get all jazzed up over it right at the start. Along about the third act’s plenty soon enough. There’s a—now—what you might call a phschological moment,” said Mr. Flexner; and after a trip of inspection to the eye-hole, he inquired who the lady with the red hair was sitting in the box with friend Cook? Did Cleve know her?

The second act began; and as it progressed, Cleve was aware of a subtle exhilaration creeping over him, in spite of himself. He recognized Flexner’s sensation that the thing was “going over.” Vapid “society” talk, mawkish sentiment, coarse innuendo and all, the audience relished it! He was relieved, bewildered, bitterly regretful, recklessly triumphant, in the same breath. How would these people have

received the original? Ah, his poor comedy, his poor *Frame-Up* that would never see the light now! It might have failed dismally, judging from the approval this unspeakable travesty met; all would have been lost save honor—and honor was a commodity he would have to do without; can't have everything, Cleve said to himself sardonically. But what was it that the audience liked? They must surely be an average audience, not dull, not low-minded. Could the trouble be within himself, and was Delmar right after all? Was the public getting what it wanted?

A great outbreak of clapping, shouts and stampings startled him; he saw the curtain which had just gone down on the third act, rise again slowly; it went all the way up, came down, went up again, five—six—seven times; he stopped counting. Langdon had come off, and was standing not far away, a little spent and unstrung after the emotional finale, dabbing a handkerchief to his forehead and face, with due regard for the grease-paint. Delmar stood by him, smiling. At another swell of applause, Langdon ceased dabbing, looked at the manager questioningly, and made a movement; and Cleve saw Delmar lay a detaining hand on his arm. The actor stood still obediently. Cleve had no idea what the pantomime meant. Somebody assured him in an undertone that she was going great. "They'll want you out there in a minute. Solly'll say when," it continued, and Cleve again found that mentor, Mr. Morris Flexner, at his side.

"But I thought they wanted Langdon or Miss Dare," he stammered.

"Yeah, sure! But they'll be hollering for Solly and you directly."

"But the others—why doesn't Langdon go out?"

"Oh, he's been out, but they wanted him again, and I guess Solly's holding him up. No use crowding things, y'know," Flexner said; and casting an experienced eye on the actor and Delmar, he added: "Now, you just notice the curtain, and you'll learn something. Next time it's lowered, if the racket kinda peters out, like they were getting tired, Solly'll have the fellow in the loft shake it a little, and that'll start 'em off again. That'll be about the 'steenth time she's been up and down. Somebody's sure to count, y'know, and talk about it afterwards, '*Langdon got eighteen curtain calls*'; it makes first-class publicity stuff," said the press agent appreciatively. "Now you watch: Delmar'll let Langdon go out this time."

It was even so! As Cleve stood petrified, the applause died down, the curtain was gently agitated, expectant clamor broke forth responsive, and Langdon went out! "Am I right?" queried Flexner, lowering his left eyelid as he encountered Cleve's gaze. "Did I or did I not told you?"

Suspicion awoke within Cleve. "Is the applause part of the hokum, too?"

Mr. Flexner appeared transiently offended. "What d'you mean, hokum?" he inquired with some severity. But he relented almost at once, dropping his left eyelid again, as he wanted to know what Cleve was trying to do? Kid him? "Of course Solly might have some pluggers out there. Audiences oftentimes don't know when the laugh comes, if they don't have somebody to start 'em," he explained reasonably. "Same way they don't always get the strong situation without somebody kinda gives 'em the high sign."

"That's another thing the public wants, I suppose," said Cleve, but the other, perhaps fortu-

nately, did not hear him, for just then Delmar went out. His strong, clear voice carried to them: "Ladies and gentlemen, it's a little hard, as you all know, for a player to say anything that's not in the piece. It's a little hard, even for the people who wrote it . . ." And after a few more words, another thundering chorus, Cleve found himself standing, bowing at a multitudinous, noisy darkness, across the dazzling arc of footlights.

The Cooks went home as they had come, with Mrs. Gherardi in her car, which with some squeezing, although it was a spacious vehicle, was made to accommodate also the sizable person of another friend, to wit, Mr. Daniel Levin, and furthermore Doctor Williams of New Haven, whom they stumbled upon, by the merest chance, leaving the Molière; he never missed a first night, he said. It was a rather silent party for the first block or two, so markedly silent, in fact, that as the machine escaped from the traffic man at Forty-second Street, and turned up the Avenue, Cook said with an effort at jocularity: "What is this? A wake?"

"Something like it, and you ought to be the chief mourner," retorted Williams. "We seem to have witnessed the passing of a very charming talent."

"Have we really?" said Edith, in a cool and detached way. "I didn't see any evidences of talent—but the play took with the audience. For myself, I don't mind a thing being stupid and I don't mind a thing being vulgar, but to be stupid and vulgar both—why, flesh and blood can't stand it!"

There was a silence. Cook thought: "Good Lord, was that what she said to the poor wretch when he came and spoke to her? He looked as if she had struck him. Maybe Bessie heard; I'll ask her." But Mrs. Cook had not heard; so no one will ever know

what Cleve said to Edith Gherardi, or what she answered.

After a while Levin said: "Well, it was rotten, of course—but all the same you people make me a little tired. The fellow has to live, hasn't he? I daresay he couldn't make a go of it, writing to suit *you*. Whose fault is that? Aren't there enough of you, or don't you buy? Money talks! If he can't get the price of his bread and butter out of *you*, he's got to try the other kind."

"*Videt meliora, proboque, deteriora sequitur!*" said Williams—whereupon Mr. Levin requested him to cut out the rough stuff!

"I've forgotten whatever Latin they drummed into me," he said, "but that sounds suspicious, Dicky. If you want to cuss Harrod, come out into the open and cuss him like a man! I say I'm sorry for him. He may have been in a tight place"—and Daniel had the best of reasons for his humane arguments. "Any other man would have done the same."

Would he? Cook, even as he acquiesced, visioned a ragged shell-crater under the hot sky of some Flanders battlefield, a stocky, young, freckle-faced American boy, trapped there, tortured with thirst, sniped at by "Bushes," alone, helpless, doomed, hurling his defiance into the very face of Heaven. "You, up there, You think You've got me beat. . . . Forget it! I'm beating You! As long as I stand it, I got You beat! . . . You can't fix it up for me so bad I won't stand it! . . . You can't beat me!" No, little George Tarvey would not have succumbed; but George was no writer, and certainly no hero—only a hotel cook.

Two other people were travelling silently homeward at about the same time; two people who, by

rights, should have been in a high state of exultation. But Cleve sat in his corner of the automobile with arms folded staring moodily, and Sophy in hers was too occupied with unhappy speculations to care that the play had seemed to be a hit. It was a wonderful play, of course; the scenery and costumes (Miss Ritchie's, in particular) and some of the things they said put her in mind of the Cooks' party; you kinda didn't like it, but you could see it was swell; and Harold Langdon appealed to her like everything, but everybody was crazy about him, just looka the calls he got! And she couldn't hardly *believe* it was Cleve, her own *husband*, when he come out, and he acted so bashful everybody laughed, but you could just *feel* they liked him, and she heard a lady say to another lady she was with, that Mr. Harrod put it all over Harold Langdon when it came to looks, if you asked *her*.

But then Cleve had come around to the boxes, and—and—. Sophy knew—or was afraid that she knew—that he never looked at her the way he did at that Mrs. Gherardi. What suspicions and fears and horrid jealousy lacerated her to see that look! The fact that Mrs. Gherardi had all too plainly “turned him down” was no solace—rather the reverse! Look at him, how hard he was taking it! Why, oh *why* did this have to happen, why should she have to stand this now, with everything else she had to stand? Cleve roused himself, making some commonplace remark, as the machine slowed down before their building; and then with a sharp laugh: “Not much longer for this hole, Sophy! Not if all that enthusiasm tonight was on the level—and most of it was!” he said. This hole! That was the way he talked about their home that she had tried so hard to make attractive for him—and he meant it

too, she was now certain. She saw him give the chauffeur a bill; that was the way everything he made would go. Next thing they would have a place like the Cooks, and Cleve would keep on throwing money around, and instead of one Mrs. Gherardi, there would be a dozen—!

She went up the stairs which tonight seemed very long and steep and toilsome, clinging to his arm, her feet heavy; and once inside the flat, dropped into the nearest chair, careless of her finery. Cleve for a moment did not even notice her! He lit a cigarette, sauntered around the room, opened a window, his mind anywhere but here at home with her. At last the silence somehow impressed itself on him. "Not very lively company for a brilliant playwright, am I?" he said with forced gaiety; and then, seeing her huddled and listless in the chair, exclaimed in concern. "Why, Sophy! Tired? You look so—. What's the matter?"

It was too much; his kindness was harder to bear than his indifference; she burst into wild crying. "Oh Cleve, you don't care for that thin old thing? You *don't*, do you?"

Cleve stood over her angry and conscience-struck, in a sickening indecision as to whether it would be best to pretend not to understand, or to enter a complete denial; either course was likely to be the wrong one—who can satisfy a jealous woman?—and either would land him in a bog of ignoble lies and evasions. Sophy herself unconsciously saved him, or at least postponed the miserable quarter of an hour. "You *don't*, do you, Cleve? I know she's awfully stylish and French dresses and never does a stroke of work and has manicures and facials and everything. I *c-can't*, you know, all I got to do—it ain't that I'm complaining, but I *can't* keep myself nice all the

time like her and Mrs. Cook, and—and—I like to look nice just for you, only right now——” Sophy gulped and sobbed, hesitating—“And when I seen her—Mrs. Gherardi, I mean—when I seen her this evening—I j-just thought how I l-looked, and I c-can’t help it, Cleve, I—I——”

“Oh, it’s *Mrs. Gherardi!*” said Cleve, and achieved a derisive laugh. “Why, what on earth made you think——? Why, Sophy, I’m surprised at you! I wouldn’t have believed my little wife——” He gathered her into his arms, desperately using all the tricks, all the old, outworn, shameful tricks with which men have unavailingly labored to appease women since time began. Sophy herself employed a trick as ancient, and heartbreakingly familiar to women, the trick of seeming to be appeased. The poor thing was not good at it; she had to pour out her heart, in spite of her.

“I c-couldn’t help it, Cleve, you—you looked so *different* whenever you and her was together. And tonight I thought—I thought——”

“Well now, that’s all nonsense, and you mustn’t think things like that any more! And don’t cry that way—don’t cry so hard, dearest,” said Cleve in real anxiety; the sobs sounded as if they would wrench her apart. “You’ll hurt yourself, and there’s nothing at all! You believe me, don’t you?”

Yes, she believed him; he was her Cleve, her own husband, and she knew he wouldn’t go to do anything wrong, only *that* Mrs. Gherardi—“She’s got *everything*, and she looked so elegantly tonight—and I—I c-can’t—I—I ain’t nice to look at any more, all lumpy and my face so kinda changed, and my c-clothes all hanging *horrid*, and pretty soon I’ll be so I can’t g-get into anything. I thought maybe you’d stop caring for me, when I wasn’t pretty any

m-more—and I'm scared anyhow—of the end, you know—”

Cleve's face of utter blankness oddly reassured her; she even smiled a little at him, ingratiatingly, like a child caught in some innocent prank. “For goodness sakes, *Cleve*, I *can't* tell you right out, I just *can't say it!* Oh, you funny big boob, you, you hadn't ought to have to be told! Why, Cleve, *can't you see, don't you know?*”

CHAPTER X

THE critics received *The Frame-Up* with tolerance, with fulminations of outraged righteousness, with calm and lofty condemnation, with regretful melancholy, according to the established character of their individual journals. "A fair evening's entertainment, with occasional risky passages" . . . "The present-day vogue for indecency exploited to the uttermost limits" . . . "Mr. Delmar's admirable art, and the perfection of acting applied, as usual, to an unworthy object" . . . "A sorry example of the blighting influence of commercialism" . . . A phrase here and there gives the temper of their comment. But who ever really heeds the critics, speak they never so wisely in praise or blame? A play, a novel, will succeed, or it will be damned in spite of them; and for that matter, in a week of these hurrying times, they and the public alike will have forgotten what was said, even the very success or failure itself, and be rushing on to the next one! Knowing this, Cleve did not let their utterances weigh too much with him; after all, what could the most severe of them say that would be harder to endure than the girdings of his own conscience? He believed, too, that the professional critics were nothing like so formidable as the professional humorists; such is the perversity of human nature that most of us would far rather be cursed than laughed at; and *The Frame-Up* offered so ample a target for ridicule that Cleve, realizing how he himself would have riddled it, dreaded the comic sheet.

However, the nimble-witted gentlemen of the pen and pencil let him off with little notice; he was not yet well enough known to point their jokes, he advised himself satirically. One can't have everything—as Flexner remarked (in effect) upon Cleve's casual reference to these facts. "*'At least they don't make fun of you!'*" echoed Morris. "Why, what you want? The earth? You gotta get into the same class with this—now—what's his name—Shaw?—You gotta get into Shaw's class before they begin to make fun of you. No difference how hard I plug for you, I can't make 'em laugh at you. That's up to *you!*!" Mr. Flexner said, not without a hint of injury and reproach, as feeling a certain slur cast upon his reputation for an able, astute and resourceful press agent. Being the quintessence of good-nature, however, he put aside resentment immediately, making allowances for the other's inexperience. "Sure, you want 'em to laugh!" he said in answer to Cleve's apologetic explanation. "You want 'em to do anything except let you alone, don't you? If you're going to get anywhere in this game, you've got to keep the public guessing about you the whole time. Minute they forget you, you're done. That's what yours faithfully, M. F. is for; and lemme tell you, it looks like I got it pretty easy, but just the same I don't earn my money picking daisies," said Mr. Flexner emphatically.

He admitted, though, that the job in hand, *i. e.*, that of touting Cleve's play, was more or less of a pipe—his own word. "She's going right along under her own steam—no need for me to extend myself, as they say about these league pitchers. Now it's all over, I'd just as lief tell you I was doubtful for a while. Every now and then Delmar pulls a bone,

y'know; you can't always trust his judgment any more than any other man's, and nobody gets by without making some errors. Now there was that *Wanted: a Housekeeper*, that he put on last year. Inside of a week you could see it heading for the scrap-heap. I did all I could. Got a couple fellows to bring suit against Delmar for stealing one of 'em's idea—plajarizing, y'know; the other fellow was a lawyer and he cooked it up with another lawyer he got hold of to be Delmar's counsel. There was a whole bunch of shysters in on it, first and last. Boy, it cost money, I'm telling y'!" said Flexner with suitable gravity. "And then I got another idea, and got this little Natalie Thraill that was in the cast understudying Mabel, to raise a row and talk a lot in the papers about breaking her contract and going in the movies. She didn't have any contract—she wasn't anybody, anyhow—but that's neither here nor there. Funny thing! Thraill's sure enough gone in the movies since, getting big money, and blamed if I don't believe that barmy fight with Delmar done it for her! That just shows! Get 'em talking, get 'em talking, that's all there is to it!" said the press agent, with profound conviction. He returned to the tragic tale of *Wanted: a Housekeeper*. "The star losing her diamonds is such old stuff I wouldn't risk it; but I had 'em lose her fur cloak, the one that she wore in the second act. It was this—now—sables, with another kind of fur lining and cost like smoke, and we advertised it all over and had her give interviews and everything. We'd had a hell of a bill to pay for that, too, only I went to Coney and Martin's up here on the Avenue where the cloak come from, and got 'em to shade the purchase price about ten per cent 'count of the free publicity they was getting; so that let us outa some of the expense.

Yeah, I did everything *I* could, hoping to start something, but it wasn't any use. We kept the show going for four weeks by main strength, as you might say. That was *something*, anyhow!" said Morris, and heaved a brief sigh to the memory of the defunct. "Well, it'll all come out in the wash. Only you can't afford many of them blow-outs. What I started out to say was I was afraid maybe I'd have to roll this one up-hill same way. But it's going all right. It's good till the first of the year anyways."

Events confirmed his judgment. *The Frame-Up* played for twelve weeks to comfortably filled houses, without recourse to any of the ingenious devices for getting 'em talking which he had described, and was accredited by popular rumor with earning fabulous sums for its co-authors. Could it be that Mr. Flexner exercised a magnifying influence over these reports? He undoubtedly would have considered them good "publicity"; and press agents labor in mysterious ways their wonders to perform—to borrow and debase a line. Cleve Harrod, for his part, viewed the money in an uneasy confusion of feelings. It now seemed to have been made with ludicrous ease, for he was doing nothing, not a stroke to earn it, and yet it continued to pour in unchecked. This time last year he would have thought the amount preposterous, a fortune, enough to subsist him and his in comfort for a generation; and already it threatened to be inadequate! His wants marched with the flood, and he was released from some cares only to take on others. Plainly it was all a matter of cutting your coat according to your cloth; very well, then, to pursue the metaphor, he must have more cloth. The needs and straits of six months past diminished in perspective to something incredibly limited, pathetic and absurd; he remembered his

meagre bank-roll devastated by poor Sophy's dress—and this spring he would be struggling with the income-tax, Schedule M, Schedule L, and all the rest of it! But perhaps in another six months he would be smiling and sighing over the problems of the Cleve Harrod who sat here now, wrinkling his brows, wondering if, after all, both ends were going to meet. He must make more money, that was all there was to it, as Flexner said; he must make more money.

They moved into another furnished apartment, in a locality so far removed from 138th Street geographically, socially, every other way, that the mind staggered to contemplate the difference! This one was in a block of houses remodelled into suites after the modern taste, with Italian-looking exteriors, all wrought iron, cut stone balconies and long glass doors. Within an atmosphere of chaste costliness obtained, with colors and textures and a placid bareness that reminded Sophy of Mrs. Cook's country home; disliking it at first, perhaps because of certain associated memories, she acknowledged later that it "sort of grew on her." She could not share Cleve's instinctive delight in the careful selection and arrangement that made of every room a charming picture; a Flemish chest of blackening wood carved with flat, intricate arabesques, a length of Chinese embroidery, a pair of cockatoos, baskets of parti-colored fruits, shepherds and shepherdesses in old porcelain were nowise decorative or interesting to Sophy; they were merely "funny," though to be sure, they were "ornaments" and better than nothing. The place had few enough "ornaments" as it was; she thought it probable that the predecessors from whom they leased it had put almost everything of that nature away for safety. But she liked the

inlaid floors and the deep, springy divans, and the little alcove with book shelves all around and cute little diamond-paned windows opening in like doors, where Cleve worked; and the bath-rooms and kitchen and closets were lovely. As soon as she could get some sofa-pillows made and some nice embroidered or crochet-work centrepieces on the tables, it would look more homey. "And I guess I'll simply *love* all those great, full-len'th looking-glasses in our bedroom, soon's I get so I want to see myself all over. Right now I feel as if I'd rather run a mile!" she said, half-laughing, half-impatient.

The change of residence was accompanied unavoidably by changes in their way of life; there were maids now; there was a taxi whenever Sophy wanted to go out shopping or merely for the air; Cleve said that in the spring they would have a car of their own, and after—after—well, after she got all over everything, and felt like herself again, they would go together for long drives in the country, or even touring, as so many people did. It was a little provoking—though maybe it *wasn't* right to say it, but it was *so* anyway, and she couldn't help it!—that this had to happen just when things had got to coming their way at last, and she and Cleve could have gone out and had a good time without looking at every nickle before they spent it. He seemed to have kinda forgotten what a hard time they'd had, but *she* didn't!

Indeed, she was much less inclined at first to extravagance, or let us say, to careless spending, than he, partly, no doubt, because she had less opportunity, less inducement. She would not go anywhere as the winter advanced, and had never made any friends who might have come to see her. Cleve, on the contrary, went out much more than heretofore,

to his club—the Oasis—to the theatres where he was becoming a known figure, to other men's clubs and houses, to teas and like entertainments where lions literary or otherwise were expected to roar as gently as sucking doves in retired window seats or discreet corners behind the palms. As the writer of a naughty play he was in growing demand among the ladies, hostesses and guests alike; the fact that he had a wife in the background by no means militated against this popularity; so many of the lions had wives in the background. It would seem that Sophy should have been more lonesome, more jealous than ever; but the truth was that she knew little or nothing of the last-named social activities; when Cleve went out, she took it for granted that he was with the men whose names he would mention on returning; and docilely accepted his theory that he *had* to go out, because that was part of the business—good publicity. Besides, according to Sophy's own theory, he might as well be out as sitting at home writing, for all the company he was, and anyhow—anyhow, she had insensibly become interested in the future, she had so much to think about nowadays there was not always the time to worry over Cleve! All at once, in some occult way, without her knowing how or when it came about, she found herself interested, fascinated, absorbed by the study of baby-clothes. The field was tremendous; astonishing possibilities were revealed. She discovered a dozen magazines devoted to that one subject, at least forty shops dealing in no other merchandise. And the sales ladies were the *sweetest*, the most *refined*, the most *sympathetic*! She learned the difference between real lace and imitation, hand-embroidery and the machine-made article under their gentle tutelage. They could even direct her to expert laundresses;

and there was nothing in the way of supplies such as bassinets, cribs, pillows, monogrammed linens and so on which they could not have executed to order. Incidentally, of course, they kept on hand a most wonderful assortment of caps, bed-jackets, wrappers, night-dresses and what-not for her own wear. The inconveniences and discomforts of approaching motherhood—and they were serious for Sophy slept ill, and felt increasingly tired and languid as time went on—were all forgotten in the novel and entrancing occupation of shopping—shopping at last—going about and buying, having the things sent home, or getting the obliging clerks to carry out the packages to her car! She put on the creations in hemstitched, eyeletted, flounced, beribboned lawns and chiffons for Cleve's benefit, the color coming back into her pale cheeks at his praise.

"Do I look nice, Cleve? Do I *really*? I think myself it kinda hides—well, anyway, I don't look quite so clumsy. It's Paris, you know, and those French women surely do know how to dress themselves. Just looka the rows and *rows* of teenchy little tucks all hand-stitched and lace in between, and look here's my initial letters, S. T. H., inside the little wreath. They had that done for me—isn't it *darling*? And oh, wait! I wanna show you those slips I got—for the baby, you know," said Sophy, unable entirely to overcome her embarrassment at this bald statement of fact. "I just had 'em sent up on approval—eighteen dollars apiece is aweful, but—I thought—well, anyhow, it's no harm for you to *see* 'em." She had him surrounded with heaps of Lilliputian finery—flannels, fluffy sacques, tiny silk shirts and socks, confections of gossamer white goods, lined with satin, dotted with rosebuds, frilled with lace that she explained were slumber-robes or

counterpanes or pillow-slips for "his" bed; the bed was there too, white and "sanitary" with small mattresses and blankets. "Aren't they just *adorable*, Cleve, so little and cute? And they're warm, too; they'll keep him just as snug!"

"You say 'he' and 'him' all the time," said Cleve in amused tenderness. "Maybe it'll be a little girl. I'd like a little girl."

"Why, Cleve Harrod, the *idea!* You'd ought to want a boy. *I* do! Girls don't have any fun. I'm just set on a boy. I got a book that tells what you can do to influence—oh, yes, and this here's a catalogue from some nurse's outfitters, but I don't guess I better buy anything of that kind right now; the other things cost so much and this can wait. But I'm going to have his nurse dress like the picture; the ones you see in the park all got clothes like that. I love those caps with ends down their backs, don't you? So *stylish!*"

Cleve again decided that he must make more money; it was the more imperative because recently he had not been making any. Not that he was idle; his desk was crowded with manuscripts; but it was all odd scraps, work merely blocked out or half-finished and laid aside in the flush of some new idea. He must have the spur of necessity to keep him at it, to do his best, he told himself—and laughed aloud. That was a fine catch-phrase, a fine bit of patter, that "spur of necessity"; it was worthy of Delmar. Under the "spur of necessity" he had done anything but his best! He had merely worked for hire. Now he found himself with surprise, faintly envious of Delmar's driving capacity; how much the man accomplished! How much he forced those under him to accomplish! To collaborate with him was, in a sense, to be freed of responsibility; you had but to

obey him to the letter with all the energy you possessed, indifferent to your own tastes, convictions, even scruples, and Delmar charged himself with the rest. Undeniably the arrangement made for comfort, surcease from care, whatever its moral aspects. Just now—and in fact for the two months previous, for he granted himself only the briefest periods of rest—the great man was busy directing the rehearsals of his next offering: *Gods of Chance*, described in the advance notices as a “daring study of courtesan life” which was to replace *The Frame-Up* at the Molière some time in January. It was by Adrian Delmar and the rising young playwright, Jasper Greene. Cleve had met him, a gaunt genius in spectacles, with a watch-chain looped across his waistcoat and a bunch of keys at the end of it. He was constantly explaining that the watch was at the jeweller’s for a broken crystal—but Cleve thought *he* knew where it was. And, “Has he got an evening coat, and did he borrow to buy it?” Cleve wondered with compassionate laughter, while seeing in Greene a skeleton at his own liberal banquet. With their present rate of living, and with the expenses for Sophy—already the doctor and druggist were incessantly called upon—looming ahead, the location of poor Greene’s watch might ere long seem less of a joke. No question of it, he must make more money.

He went to see Wallace, who was now on the staff of Messrs. Straus and Lewissohn, and had lately superintended the staging of the Oriental melodrama, *Abou ben Adhem* with the Royal Persian Ballet, who created such a furore. After some negotiations, Cleve came away with the understanding that they were to have the first reading of the new play he outlined, founded on that ancient, wild Norse legend of *Kalbrenner*, the demon who lived in the

depths of the Maelstrom, and conducted a lively traffic in men's souls, after the established habit of demons. "It will have to end happily, however. Nothing like—er—*Faust*, for instance, would please—unless, of course, it were by some foreign author," Mr. Wallace said; and he murmured some hazy allusions to Strindberg and Sudermann. "There is a physchological reason, a rather noble and touching reason, for the public's preference for the happy ending, Mr. Harrod. We were surfeited with the tragic and brutal aspects of life during those dreadful years of the War; the reaction is natural, and as I say we cannot but be moved by it and respect it. The works of foreign authors are necessarily viewed from a different angle; they can—er—do as they choose, to put it crudely. But of our own writers we demand the happy ending—"

Cleve startled him with sudden laughter. "'Thou too, Brutus!'" he ejaculated, rather to the perplexity of Mr. Wallace, who, however, was not unacquainted with the vagaries of temperament as displayed by writers, and most humanely indulgent. "Your aim is to give the public what it wants," said Cleve, sobering down. "I understand perfectly, and I am in entire sympathy with your views, Mr. Wallace. I'm sure the happy ending can be arranged." He went home and to work.

This play eventually reached the footlights as *The Man from the Sea*, both Lewisohn and Strauss setting their veto upon calling it either *Kalbrenner* or *The Maelstrom*, titles which Cleve at first suggested. It would queer their house irrevocably, they stated, to allow *Abou ben Adhem* to be succeeded by another show with another jaw-breaking monicker, as Mr. Strauss characterized it. "Y'understand I ain't saying anything derogatory, Mr. Harrod, but

they'd kid us out of the business. That's why y'got to think up something else," he said firmly. So *The Man from the Sea* it became, and was put on about the middle of Lent; and while arriving at no such spectacular success as *Abou ben Adhem*, nevertheless had a profitable run, and may be said to have definitely established Cleve's reputation for a steady purveyor to the public's wants.

It had been going something like two weeks, when Cleve was called in haste from the theatre one night, and ran out and jumped into the car which he had kept waiting for him at the stage door during every performance since the piece opened, in expectation of such a summons. Certain rumors had gotten around by some underground circuit, and those who witnessed the hurried exit, looked after him with benevolent smiles. Up at the apartment there was a kind of busy and whispering hush, with the lights dimmed in the living-room, and very bright elsewhere, and odors of a kind of sickly pungency hung in the air. The servants were all up; the doctor was there with his coat off and sleeves rolled up; the nurse who had been engaged ahead and who had already been with them a week stopped as she was brushing past Cleve in the hall to tell him in a rapid, lowered voice that they had thought it best—that is, she had taken it on herself to send for another nurse. Was that all right? She hoped—?

"Yes, certainly! Yes, of course! Have anybody you want—all the people you want! Don't let her need anything, I want her to have everything!" said Cleve feverishly. "Is the other one here? Get her here, get her here at once! Where does she live? I'll send the machine for her—"

The nurse hushed him with kind authority; she was used to frightened, excited men, and looked at

him with a certain pity. "She's here, she's with Mrs. Harrod now. We're going to ask you to keep as quiet as you can, Mr. Harrod. If she hears your voice, she'll get excited and want to see you, and we'll have trouble getting her under."

"'Getting her under'?" Cleve repeated, stupidly.

"Yes, the ether, you know. Don't be scared; it's nothing out of the way. Ever so many of them have to have it."

"Is she—is she suffering? In great pain?" Cleve asked, horror clutching at his heart.

"Well, it's never easy, you know," Miss Wimple said with the forbearing superiority of a woman. "Now you just go off quietly somewhere by yourself. There isn't anything you can do. We'll let you know—" She moved on as the other nurse came to the bedroom door farther down the hall, signalling her. A strong whiff of ether stung Cleve's throat.

He wandered irresolutely back into the living-room, and sat down by the fireside and tried to smoke; but the anaesthetic seemed to have permeated the tobacco along with everything else, and he gave it up after a while and sat staring into the coals. There was more hurrying and whispering outside in the hall; he was startled to hear a man's voice giving some abrupt order, then remembered that it was the doctor. One of the nurses was at the telephone; he could hear her urgently repeating the street and the house-number, and gathered that she was sending to the drug store for something. Sudden relief and comfort visited him with the thought of those clean, strong, competent-looking women with their quiet and deft movements, their steady nerves. Well, Sophy was having the best of care anyhow—two nurses— It came into his head

that he might go and tell them to get another doctor, too, and he was actually half-way to the door on this insane errand, but with almost a laugh, stopped himself. He came slowly back, looking around the elegant room. Yes, Sophy was having the best of care, living in the ultimate comfort. Everything that money could buy—

He looked at his watch; it was eleven o'clock. The play would be over and the crowd going home in half an hour. He was so familiar with the action and dialogue he knew that at this very moment, Jim Darrow, the comedian who took the part of a drunken sailor, was shouting out that line about "her sheets and her stays" that always brought a laugh, in tribute to Jim's facial expression, or to the double meaning Cleve himself had written into the whole speech. The play was poor stuff, vile stuff, "happy ending" and all, but no worse than *The Frame-Up* perhaps. It had been much easier for him to write it; he had his hand in now, he thought scornfully; he would probably acquire a brilliant facility as he went along. Truly a high achievement, giving the public what it wanted! But—he looked around the room again. Everything that money could buy! Supposing this had befallen Sophy up at 138th Street? He cringed to think of it—the noise, the dirt, the neighboring women, good souls coming in, gabbling, himself in a corner, idle, inefficient, terrified by duns and bills. Here there was privacy, luxury, trained attendance, everything that money could buy. Was it not worth a surrender? "The Lord pardon Thy servant in this thing; that when I bow myself down . . ." Let Jim Darrow wade in ribaldry, and the audience with him! A man's first duty was to his family.

In his aimless moving about he came to the din-

ing-room door and went in to the sideboard and poured out a drink of whiskey, but could only swallow a mouthful. Everything seemed to be tainted with ether, and he disliked the liquor at its best, keeping it about only because it seemed to be expected that one should have a "cellar" or a "private stock"; Dan Levin had secured this for him at a bargain price, two hundred dollars a case. Levin was a good fellow, Symmes another, Cook, all those men. They had the charity not to censure him for his defeat; or maybe it was indifference.

He went back and sat down by the dead fire; he must have dozed off in sheer fatigue of mind, for he was aware of an interval, but whether long or short he could not tell before a sound penetrated to him as from a great distance, then suddenly near at hand and distinct. Someone was at the outer hall door; Cleve reached it ahead of the nurse. A boy, in charge of a strange object, some sort of metal canister almost as tall as himself, stood outside. "Suite thirty-four? Oxygen tank?"

"I don't know—wait a minute!" said Cleve helplessly. But Miss Wimble had now come up to them, and she waved the boy back, pushing the door to on him.

"You can take it back. We shan't need it." She glanced at Cleve questioningly. "There may be a charge just for bringing it—"

"It's all right, I tell you—anything, anything! It doesn't make any difference what it costs. Have it, have it! Get it for her! I want her to have everything—"

"Sh-h," said the nurse soothingly. She began to say something, then appeared to change her mind, and said: "Doctor Ellis just sent me for you, Mr. Harrod. He says you can come in now."

"Can I see her? Is it—is it——?"

"Yes, it's over," Miss Wimple said.

They went into the room which was in a wild confusion, with the bed pulled forward out of place and a litter of sponges, rags, basins, gleaming steel tools; the other nurse stood holding a bundle of something in her arms. The doctor was standing near her talking in a low voice. "Just like *that*," he said, soundlessly snapping a thumb and forefinger. "Before I could turn around . . . one sigh . . . no stamina . . ." He shook his head and began mechanically to roll down his shirt sleeves. In the haggard light of daybreak, he looked worn, hollow-eyed and dejected. The nurse nodded, swaying her body to and fro with her eyes on the bundle. Both of them looked at Cleve gravely. Miss Wimple laid her hand on his arm.

"You've got a nice little girl baby, Mr. Harrod. We'd have called you before, only——" she hesitated, looking at the doctor. The other nurse came up, repeating: "You've got a nice little girl baby——"

Cleve stared down at the little creature in the bundle, without any stirring of parental affection; then he remembered in a rush that he must pretend to be delighted to please Sophy. And why were none of them paying any attention to Sophy? She lay quietly among the pillows; of course she was exhausted, and they were letting her rest. On the wall over the bed she had hung a sentimental chromo—*Her Christmas Present* was the title—of a new young mother in bed, the baby's round little head just showing beside her, a young husband bending over, kissing her weak hand. Cleve recollected how she had brought it home, all framed and glazed, from some department store bargain counter, and

her enthusiasm over it——“So sweet! Her with her eyes glued to the baby, and him bending over just worshipping both of ‘em!’” It came into his head that she would like him to act in some such manner; he made a step towards the bed.

“My wife’s asleep!”

The two women looked at each other; and Miss Wimple put her hand on his arm again. “No, Mr. Harrod, she’s not asleep,” she said, very gently.

ENVOY

ONE evening not long ago, towards eight o'clock, a bald, heavy-set old gentleman in a nice, spruce business suit, went into the lobby of the Delmar Theatre, and up to the little window of the office, hoping to get a seat for the first night of *In Arcady*. He visited New York City about once a year, and between times made it a point to keep a list of theatrical attractions, so that—as he was in the habit of saying—he might take in those that were worth while, and waste no time on the others. Consequently, he received the official's smilingly regretful, "Not a chance! We're sold out," philosophically, and was moving off to seek the next place of entertainment on his menu, when, by one of those lucky accidents that befall every one of us at least once, another man came up to turn in his ticket at the last minute. "Hi, here y're, if you want it!" said the man behind the grating; and the stout old gentleman, remarking that nobody could make him mad that way, reached for his wallet and was in the act and article of counting out the price when another unexpected and much more startling event took place. That is to say, some one tapped him authoritatively on the shoulder, commanding at the same time in stern accents that he put that up! "Put it up, sir! Your money is not good at this theatre!"

He jerked around with a grunt of astonishment. "Huh? What's that? *Not good?* Who're you talking to——?" He broke off, puzzled and taken aback

to encounter a friendly grin on the countenance of a tall, wide, muscular-looking stranger who proceeded to take him by the elbow and draw him to one side out of the gathering crowd, meanwhile addressing mysterious confidences to the box-office. "'S all right, Charlie! I'll take him into mine," were his exact words, and Charlie responded, "Yeh, all right!"—and there they were through the gate, and inside of the charmed enclosure, and the tall man said with another laugh, "Get that roll back in your breeches, or somebody else will be slipping it into his. Don't you know me, Uncle John?"

A kind of doubting recognition spread slowly over Mr. John Harrod's features. "Why—Is it *Cleve*? It *is* Cleve? Well! Is it Cleve? Well! I never would have known you!" They shook hands, the uncle continuing fragmentary expressions of surprise. Great Scott, what a big fellow Cleve had got to be! Let's see, it must be all of ten years—nearer fifteen!—since they met, wasn't it? Well, well! Of course, he'd heard of Cleve from the folks; they were all mighty proud of him—his mother, of course—mighty proud. Well, well! This would be something to tell 'em when he got back home. Talk about coincidences! He hadn't heard anything about this play—not who wrote it or anything. Just knew that you were pretty sure to see a good show at the Delmar, and always went there for first choice; if he couldn't get a seat, went somewhere else. Well! So Cleve wrote this? And this was its first try-out? How'd it feel? Nervous? Or was it too old a story by this time?

Cleve thought his uncle had not aged much, in these years; to the boy of eighteen, all the senior generation of Harrods appeared of a venerable and most severe antiquity, and the illusion had persisted

ever since, so that now Mr. John Harrod, though he must be nearing seventy, looked scarcely older to Cleve than at that first and last encounter years ago. He left him in the box, promising to come back after the first act, and to see if he could persuade Delmar, who was a stiff disciplinarian, to let him take a visitor "behind." Mr. Harrod was nothing loath; he had noticed a slight stir and murmur and turning of heads in their direction at Cleve's entrance and exit, and found it no unpleasant sensation to be stared at and whispered about as one on enviably familiar terms with the celebrity. Besides the whole experience was unusual and highly interesting; who would ever have believed that that doless boy——? The curtain was going up.

At the close of the act, which was very well received, Cleve came around again, true to his word; and he piloted the old gentleman "behind" where, during the progress of the next, Mr. Harrod acquired enough first-hand information about the viewless processes of the stage—that perennially fascinating locality—to last him through all the dinners of his remaining career. He saw the mechanical contrivances for simulating rain, lightning and thunder, in action; he stood side by side with the star, with the hero who played opposite her, with the first character-man, an actor known all over the country, and marvelled at the strangeness of their appearance close at hand in paint and wigs; he was introduced to Mr. Delmar, and he had "quite a talk" with a Mr. Morris Flexner—out of earshot of the audience, of course. "No talking allowed 'behind.' They can't have a sound *there*, you know," Mr. Harrod would say with the air of one emphatically "on the inside" describing his adventure. "The third act regularly brought down the house,

as we used to say in the old days—now they tell you it was a ‘riot’ or a ‘scream’ or a ‘knock-out.’ Anyway, it seems that after the second or third act is the time when they go out and make their speeches, you know. I’d have supposed that they’d leave that until the whole play was over. But this Mr. Flexner said not; he said the audience was all set to go home, make their suburban trains, or grab off their seats in the subway and so on, by that time, and they wouldn’t wait to listen to the Angel Gabriel! But what I was going to tell you was that the only time we dared to open our mouths, even for a whisper, was while all this uproar of applause was going on. Nobody could hear anything, then, of course. He told me some more interesting things——”

Mr. Flexner, on his side, reported that Harrod’s uncle was a pretty good old sport. Mr. Harrod confided to the press agent that he had not seen Cleve for years, and felt as if he scarcely knew him. “Let’s see, he’s married, isn’t he? Seems to me I heard he was married?”

“Yeah, but she’s dead—died here a year or so ago. He’s got over it, I guess,” said Flexner drily. “The ladies all fall for him right along.”

“Do, hey?” They exchanged a glance charged with meaning. Cleve came and joined them as they journeyed to the wings during the third act; the character-man r. u. was saying something which was followed by a thunderous wave of men’s laughter, crested with light feminine titters. Flexner leaned over with a barely audible word. “That got to ‘em!” he said, nodding in satisfaction. The older man thought it pretty broad for a mixed audience, but times were changed. They said and did things nowadays——! He could remember when *Mazepa*

and *The Black Crook* were considered questionable entertainment to which a young fellow would not take his girl. The act ended, as he described it later, in tumultuous approval, which seemed, Uncle John observed, not without a wondering respect, to make hardly any impression on Cleve. One would think that a writer would never get used to applause or have a surfeit of it; and again he asked inwardly: who would have expected it of that boy?

"Say, Cleve," he said under cover of the noise, "remember that time after your poor father's death when we were all talking over ways and means and I wanted you to try writing corset advertisements?" He laughed awkwardly. "Remember how mad you got?"

Cleve laughed too. "Yes, indeed! Yes, I remember!"

"We didn't know, Cleve. We couldn't tell. You were kind of different from the other children, but we didn't know——"

Cleve felt the apology in his tone with a pang of humiliation. "Why, Uncle John, you were right, and I was nothing but a cocky young ass!" he said roughly. "I ought to have done it."

"Well, we didn't know, Cleve," the other repeated, still humbly. The tumult out "front" subsided momentarily as the star went out; and they had to keep silence. Cleve stood gazing, seeing nothing. Ah, that boy! What had become of him with his innocent courage, his high belief, his proud clean heart? With a hand thrust deep into one pocket he touched the crêpey surface of a bill, the outermost one of the roll—a symbolically soiled bill, worn with handling. Some one discreetly jogged his arm; it was Flexner. "Wake up! You're wanted!"

Cleve went out before the curtain.



